Vol. III. No. 4. March, 1935

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

D. W. HARDING L. C. KNIGHTS
F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

CONTENTS

PROLETARIAN LITERATURE, by *William Empson* *page* 332

REVALUATIONS (VII): GEORGE CHAPMAN (i), by *James Smith* 339

UNPUBLISHED POEMS, by *Isaac Rosenberg* 351

ASPECTS OF THE POETRY OF ISAAC ROSENBERG, by *D. W. Harding* 358

MUSICAL HISTORY, by *Bruce Pattison* 369

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 378

THE TIMES IN SCHOOL, by Denys Thompson (p. 378). DR. RICHARDS, BENTHAM AND COLERIDGE, *Coleridge on Imagination*, reviewed by F. R. Leavis (p. 382). POETRY 1934, a review by H. A. Mason (p. 402). MR. POUND'S PROPERTIUS, a review by John Speirs (p. 409). *The Balcony*, reviewed by Sylvia Legge (p. 418). *The Land of Plenty*, reviewed by Frank Chapman (p. 419). THE SOLID VIRTUES, *Claudius the God*, reviewed by D. W. Harding (p. 421). *Early Victorian Novelists*, reviewed by Frank Chapman (p. 422). THE CRITICISM OF BALLET, *Balletomania*, reviewed by Erik Mesterton (p. 424). A PUBLIC FOR ART IN INDUSTRY, a review by J. M. Harding (p. 428). *Sociology*, reviewed by H. W. Durant (p. 433). *The Twilight of Parenthood*, reviewed by C. E. Lucas (p. 434).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PROLETARIAN LITERATURE

IT is hard for an Englishman to talk definitely about proletarian art, because in England it has never been a genre with settled principles, and such as there is of it, that I have seen, is bad. But it is important to try to decide what the term ought to mean ; my suspicion, as I shall try to make clear, is that it is liable to a false limitation.

As for propaganda, some very good work has been that ; most authors want their point of view to be convincing. Pope said that even the *Aeneid* was a ' political puff ' ; its dreamy, impersonal, universal melancholy was a calculated support for Augustus. And on the other hand proletarian literature need not be propaganda ; *Carl and Anna* is simply a very good love-story ; it counts as proletarian because no other social world (ideology) is brought in but that of the characters who are factory-workers. Of course to decide on an author's purpose, conscious or unconscious, is very difficult. Good writing is not done unless there are serious forces at work ; and it is not permanent unless it works for readers with opinions different from the author's. (On the other hand the reason an English audience can enjoy Russian propagandist films is that the propaganda is too remote to be annoying ; a Tory audience subjected to the same degree of Tory propaganda would be extremely bored.) Anyway it is agreed that there is some good work which a Marxist would call proletarian ; the more pressing questions for him are whether some good work may be bourgeois and whether some may not be class-conscious at all.

Gray's elegy is an odd case of poetry with latent political ideas.

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What this means, as the context makes clear, is that eighteenth century England had no scholarship system or *carrière ouverte aux talents*. This is stated as pathetic, but the reader is put into a mood in which one would not try to alter it. (It is true that Gray's society, unlike a possible machine society, was necessarily based on manual labour, but it might have used a man of special ability wherever he was born). By comparing the social arrangement to Nature he makes it seem inevitable, which it was not, and gives it a dignity which was undeserved. Furthermore a gem does not mind being in a cave and a flower prefers not to be picked ; we feel that the man is like the flower as short-lived, natural, and valuable, and this tricks us into feeling that he is better off without opportunities. The sexual suggestion of *blush* brings in the Christian idea that virginity is good in itself, and so that any renunciation is good ; this may trick us into feeling it is lucky for the poor man that society keeps him unspotted from the world. The tone of melancholy claims that the poet understands the considerations opposed to aristocracy, though he judges against them ; the truism of the reflections in the churchyard, the universality and impersonality this gives to the style, claim as if by comparison that we ought to accept the injustice of society as we do the inevitability of death.

Many people, without being communists, have been irritated by the complacence in the massive clam of the poem, and this seems partly because they feel there is a cheat in the politics implied ; the ' bourgeois ' themselves do not like literature to have too much ' bourgeois ideology.'

And yet what is said is one of the permanent truths ; it is only in degree that any improvement of society could prevent wastage of human powers ; the waste even in a fortunate life, the isolation even of a life rich in intimacy, cannot but be felt deeply, and is the central feeling of tragedy. And anything of value must accept this because it must not prostitute itself ; its strength is to be prepared to waste itself if it does not get its opportunity. A statement of this is certainly non-political because it is true in any society ; and yet nearly all the great poetic statements of it are in a sense ' bourgeois,' like this one ; they suggest to many readers, though they do not say, that for the poor man things cannot be improved even in degree. This at least shows that the distinction

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the communists try to draw is a puzzling one ; two people may get very different experiences from the same work of art without either being definitely wrong. One is told that the Russians now disapprove of tragedy, and that there was a performance of ' Hamlet ' in the *Turk-Sib* region which the audience decided spontaneously was a farce. They may well hold out against the melancholy of old Russia, and for them there might be dangerous implications in any tragedy which other people do not see. I am sure at any rate that one could not estimate the amount of bourgeois ideology ' really in ' the verse from Gray.

The same difficulty arises in the other direction. Proletarian literature usually has a suggestion of pastoral, a puzzling form which looks proletarian but isn't. I must worry the meaning of the term for a moment. One might define proletarian art as the propaganda of a factory-working class which feels its interests opposed to the factory owners ; this narrow sense is perhaps what is usually meant but not very interesting. You couldn't have proletarian literature in this sense in a successful socialist state. The wider sense of the term includes such folk-literature as is by the people, for the people, and about the people. But most fairy-stories and ballads, though ' by ' and ' for,' are not ' about,' whereas pastoral though ' about ' is not ' by ' or ' for.' The Border ballads assume a society of fighting clans who are protected by their leaders since leaders can afford expensive weapons ; the aristocrat has an obvious function for the people, and they are pleased to describe his grandeur and fine clothes (this pleasure in him as an object of fantasy is the normal thing, but usually there are forces the other way). They were class-conscious all right but not conscious of class war. Pastoral is a queerer business but I think permanent and not dependent on a system of class exploitation. Any socialist state with an intelligentsia at the capital that felt itself more cultivated than the farmers (which it would do ; the arts are produced by over-crowding) could produce it ; in a subdued form it is common in Russian films and a great part of their beauty (for instance the one called *The General Line* when it came to England). My reason for dragging this old-fashioned form into the discussion is that I think good proletarian literature is generally Covert Pastoral.

Before theorizing about this it is best to look at some recent

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

English artists. A book like Lionel Britton's *Hunger and Love*, one of the few ostensibly proletarian works of any energy that England has to show (I disliked it too much to finish it) is not at all pastoral ; it is a passionate and feverish account of a man trying to break his way out of the proletariat into the intelligentsia, or rather the lower middle classes into the upper. As such it may be good literature by sheer force, and useful propaganda if it is not out of date by the time it is written, but what the author wanted was the opportunity not to be proletarian ; this is fine enough, but it doesn't make proletarian literature. D. H. Lawrence's refusal to write it was an important choice, but he was a complicated person ; to see the general reasons one had best take a simpler example. George Bissill the painter, who worked from childhood in the mines and did some excellent woodcuts of them, refused to work for the *New Leader* (which wanted political cartoons) because he had rather be a Pavement Artist than a proletarian one. As a person he is obviously not ' bourgeois,' unless being determined not to go back to the mines makes you that. Such a man dislikes proletarian art because he feels that it is like pastoral, and that that is either patronizing or ' romantic.' The Englishman who seems to me nearest to a proletarian artist (of those I know anything about) is John Grierson the film producer ; *Drifters* gave very vividly the feeling of actually living on a herring trawler and (by the beauty of shapes of water and net and fish, and subtleties of timing and so forth) what I should call a pastoral feeling about the dignity of that form of labour. It is very much under Russian influence. But herring fishermen are unlikely to see *Drifters* ; for all its government-commercial claim to solid usefulness it is a ' high-brow ' picture (that blasting word shows an involuntary falsity in the thing) ; Grierson's influence, strong and healthy as it is, has something skimpy about it. Of course there are plenty of skilled workers in England who are proud of their skill, and you can find men of middle age working on farms who say they prefer the country to the town, but anything like what I am calling pastoral is a shock to the Englishman who meets it on the Continent. My only personal memory of this sort is of watching Spaniards tread out sherry grapes and squeeze out the skins afterwards, which involves dance steps with a complicated rhythm. I said what was obvious, that this was like the Russian Ballet,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and to my alarm the remark was translated ; an English worker would take it as an insult, probably a sexual one. They were faintly pleased at so obvious a point being recognized, and showed us the other dance step used in a neighbouring district ; both ways were pleasant in themselves and the efficient way to get the maximum juice. The point is not that they were living simple pretty lives by themselves ; quite the contrary ; some quality in their own very harsh lives made them feel at home with the rest of civilization, not suspicious of it. This may well show the backwardness of the country ; for that matter there were the same feelings in Russia for the Soviets to use if they could get at them. They seem able to bring off something like a pastoral feeling in Spain and Russia, but in an English artist, whatever his personal sincerity, it seems dogged by humbug, and has done for a long time (Johnson was I think the first to say so). This may well be a grave fault in the English social system, but it is not one that an English artist can avoid by becoming a proletarian artist.

The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way). From seeing the two sorts of people combined like this you thought better of both ; the best parts of both were used. The effect was in some degree to combine in the reader or author the merits of the two sorts ; he was made to mirror in himself more completely the effective elements of the society he lived in. This was often absurdly artificial ; the praise of simplicity usually went with extreme flattery of a patron (dignified as a symbol of the society), done so that the author could get some of the patron's luxuries ; it allowed the flattery to be more extreme because it helped both author and patron to keep their self-respect. So it was soon parodied, especially to make the poor man worthy but ridiculous, as often in Shakespeare ; nor is this merely snobbish when in its full form. The simple man becomes a clumsy fool who yet has better 'sense' than his betters and can say things more fundamentally true ; he is 'in contact with nature,' which the complex man needs to be, so that Bottom is not afraid of the fairies ; he is in contact with the mysterious forces of our

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own nature, so that the clown has the wit of the unconscious ; he can speak the truth because he has nothing to lose. Both versions, straight and comic, are based on a double attitude of the artist to the worker, of the complex man to the simple one (' I am in one way better, in another not so good '), and I think that this recognizes a permanent truth about the aesthetic situation. To produce pure proletarian art the artist must be at one with the worker ; this is impossible not for political reasons but because the artist is never at one with any public. It may be that to produce any good art he must be somehow in contact with the workers, it may be that Russia is now going to produce very good art, with all the vigour of a society which is a healthy and unified organism, but I am sure that it will not be pure proletarian art and I think it will spoil itself if it tries to be.

The realist sort of pastoral also gives a natural expression for a sense of social injustice. So far as the person described is outside society because too poor for its benefits he is independent, as the artist claims to be, and can be a critic of society ; so far as he is forced by this into crime he is the judge of the society that judges him. This is a source of irony both against him and against the society, and if he is a sympathetic figure he can be made to suggest both Christ as the scapegoat (so invoking Christian charity) and the sacrificial tragic hero, who was above society rather than below it, which is a further source of irony. Dostoevsky is always using these ideas ; perhaps unhealthily, but as very strong propaganda. But I doubt whether they are allowed in proletarian literature ; the Communists do not approve of them, either as tragic or Christian, both because they glorify the independent man and because they could be used against any society, including a Communist one.

The great poetic statements of human waste and limitation, whose function is to give strength to see life clearly and so to adopt a fuller attitude to it, usually bring in, or leave room for the reader to bring in, this whole set of ideas. For such crucial literary achievements usually involve an attempt to reconcile some conflict between the parts of a society ; literature is a social process, and also an attempt to reconcile the conflicts of the individual, in whom those of society will be mirrored. (The belief that a man's ideas are wholly the product of his economic position is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of course as fatuous as the belief that they are wholly independent of it). So ' fundamentally true ' goes to ' true about people in all parts of society, even those you wouldn't expect,' and this implies the tone of humility normal to pastoral. ' I now abandon my specialized feelings because I am trying to find better ones, so I must balance myself for the moment by imagining the feelings of the simple person. He may be in a better state than I by luck, freshness, or divine grace ; value is outside any scheme for the measurement of value, because that too must be valued.' Various paradoxes may be thrown in here. ' I must imagine his way of feeling because the refined thing must be judged by the fundamental thing, because strength must be learned in weakness and sociability in isolation, because the best manners are learned in the simple life ' (this last is the point of Spenser's paradox about courtly ' ; the Book of Courtesy takes the reader among Noble Savages). Now all these ideas are very well suited to a socialist society, and have been made to fit in with the dogma of the equality of man, but I do not see that they fit in with a rigid proletarian aesthetic. They assume that it is sometimes a good thing to stand apart from your society as far as you can. They assume that some people are more delicate and complex than others, and that if such people can keep this distinction from doing harm it is a good thing, though a small thing in comparison with our common humanity. Once you allow the arts to admit this you will get works of art which imply that the special man ought to be more specially treated, and that is not pure proletarian literature.

It is for reasons like this that the most valuable works of art so often have a political implication which can be pounced upon and called bourgeois. They carry an implication about the society they were written for ; the question is whether the same must not be true of any human society, even if it is much better than theirs. My own difficulty about proletarian literature is that when it comes off I find I am taking it as pastoral literature ; I read into it, or find that the author has secretly put into it, these more subtle, more far-reaching, and I think more permanent ideas.

W. EMPSON.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REVALUATIONS (VII)

GEORGE CHAPMAN

I.

'CHAPMAN'S genius was undramatic; it was merely his material needs which drove him to the form.' I take the quotation from Dr. Janet Spens, but it might have come from almost any writer upon Chapman. Nevertheless I do not think it true.

Mr. Eliot has suggested that there are more kinds of drama than the critic can keep in mind; and that therefore judgments upon a piece as 'undramatic' are not so much false as misleading. They are taken to exclude from a genus, whereas they can only exclude from a species. I incline to the belief that, in any species of drama, the marks of the genus must remain fairly obvious (though it may not be easy to say what they are). In any case I do not wish to imply that Chapman is dramatic merely in a sense peculiar to himself, or to himself and others whom the critic might fairly be excused from keeping in mind. He is dramatic, I think, in the sense in which his contemporaries are so.

I do not of course wish to maintain that all his plays are good ones: *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, for example, I think a very bad one. Not only do I fail to find in it any sequence of events other than a merely temporal—a vow, an arrest, a release, a ghost, an assassination, a suicide—but neither do I find in it any sign of interest, intellectual or emotional, taken in these events by the principal personages. A drama is conceivable, I suppose, without any sequence of events; but hardly with an impassible hero. Clermont boasts of his

> '. . . glad obedience
> To anything the high and general Cause
> To match with his whole fabric hath ordained;'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in other words, of his immunity to that ' suffering for things over which a man has no control ' in which his master, Epictetus, declared all tragedy to consist. The result is that when Clermont dies I am affected, not as with a tragedy, but as with a person's moving out of hearing, or with the stopping of a gramophone.

Nevertheless *The Revenge* is usually considered as on a level of achievement with *Bussy* and with the *Byron* plays ; sometimes indeed it is held to be a greater achievement. Here I see a very strong suggestion, perhaps a proof, that the traditional misjudgment upon *Bussy* and *Byron* rests on a failure to recognize, not merely a *differentia*, but a genus. The genus under which the plays are assumed to fall cannot I think be that of the character sketch ; for, in the absence of all pertinent action, this could only be of the type of Theophrastus or of Earle. The sketch of Clermont, if taken as of this type, must be dismissed as a bad one—and if it were a good one, would not retain the attention as developed through five acts. It is I think the verse in *The Revenge* which receives almost exclusive notice ; and all Chapman's tragedies are traditionally considered, not as plays, not even as character sketches, but as poems.

Again let me say that in my opinion the verse in *The Revenge* is not of a noticeably better quality than that in the other plays. An examination of some hundreds of lines of verse must always be a laborious matter ; but I think that if it were undertaken the conclusion would at least appear plausible that, while the verse in *The Revenge* often differs in type from that in *Bussy*, where they are comparable, that in *The Revenge* is usually inferior ; and that it is inferior to the far greater part of the verse in *Byron*. The exaltation of the verse in *The Revenge* is consequent, I think, upon a very simple misunderstanding. The description has come to be accepted, that Chapman is a metaphysical poet ; in *The Revenge*—largely because of the ' virtuous digressions ' of the hero—there is more metaphysics than in any other play ; therefore it is the greater work.

I hope this will not sound too crude. It must be remembered that, in classification, the terms adopted in the first steps of the process are largely the source of light showing what the later steps must be ; and that in literary criticism the atmosphere often is more than usually dark. A small light may not be very effective ;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the other hand, even if small, it may cause temporary blindness in the explorer. The point is of importance, and perhaps I may be allowed to illustrate it with an example.

Of all recent writers who have discussed or referred to Chapman, Mr. Eliot is by far the most understanding and sympathetic. Yet I think that, because of the introduction of an ill-considered or insufficiently considered term, he has made statements about Chapman that an inspection of the text shows to be false. The term I speak of is again 'metaphysical'; not however defined as was suggested above, but less crudely if less intelligibly as that which bears evidence of 'a very high development of the senses,' of an 'intellect immediately at the tips of the sense,' or of 'a quality of senuous thought, or of thinking through the senses, or of the senses thinking.' I call the term 'ill-considered' because I fail to make any meaning of the definition, and because I suspect it has no meaning at all. Its effect on Mr. Eliot's criticism has been as follows. After remarking that 'in Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a direct recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne,' Mr. Eliot quotes by way of illustration the following lines from *The Revenge*:

> '. . . in this one thing, all the discipline
> Of manners and of manhood is contained:
> A man to join himself with th' Universe
> In his main sway and make (in all things fit)
> One with that all, and go on round as it;
> Not plucking from the whole his wretched part,
> And into straits, or into nought revert,
> Wishing the complete Universe might be
> Subject to such a rag of it as he,
> But to remember great Necessity.'

Being ignorant of the quality of 'sensuous thought,' I search the passage for what are presumably its elements, sense and thought; and first for sense. If read aloud, the passage appeals to the ear; but so would any other passage, and the nice discrimination of the quality of such appeals—if indeed, it is possible—is one upon which I imagine Mr. Eliot would not care to engage. But of an appeal to the senses of any other kind there is hardly a trace. The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

metaphors, if not dead, are moribund: I say to myself that I am joining a party, or that I am tearing myself away from a party of a different kind, unconscious that I am employing any language charged with sense. As for the thought in the passage, its general trend is clear ; but what of the structure? What qualification, for example, is introduced by the phrase ' in his main sway '? And does the adjective ' fit ' limit ' things ' or ' a man '? If the first, not the whole man will join the universe, and this is indeed a possible interpretation of ' in his main sway ' ; but as a result of it Chapman is involved in self-contradiction and verges upon bathos. If the second, Chapman is repetitive without gaining in emphasis. Is ' round ' in ' go on round as it ' adjectival or adverbial? What is the alternative proposed in the line

' And into straits, or into nought revert '?

Successive qualifications like this should, of course, be successive approximations to the precise expression of the thought ; but here I would say they make the opposite impression. *Ce ne sont pas les mots qui manquent à la pensée, c'est la pensée qui manque aux mots.* But, it may be replied, this impression of fumbling is intended, so that the definition of the close shall stand out more clearly ; determined as it is by the rhythm, and emphasized by the rhyme. The determined close, however, is the work not of Chapman but of Mr. Eliot. There is no period after ' Necessity ' in Chapman ; and the verb ' remember ' governs, not a single noun, but a clause extending over three lines, of which that noun is the subject. To this clause is sub-ordinated another extending over nine more lines. If these are examined it will be found I think that they continue, and if possible exaggerate, the fumbling that has preceded. Recalling Mr. Eliot's comparison with Donne, the reader will ask if anywhere in that author there are to be found twenty consecutive lines so little animated by invention, so little organized by wit. I cannot think of twenty.

Aided it is true by a faulty memory which, in mutilating, improves, but chiefly I think misled by an ill-considered term, Mr. Eliot presents a passage as possessing qualities which it would not appear to possess. There may therefore be less need for hesitation in asserting that two qualities traditionally ascribed to Chapman's plays—profundity and obscurity—are not in fact to be found in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them ; or not to be found in them to any extent, or in any mode relevant to a final judgment upon Chapman's work. The source of the ascription is partly the term ' metaphysical '—for the metaphysical in poetry has been deemed *ipso facto* profound and obscure, and very good as well—but partly also, in the case of profundity, Chapman himself. He took great pains to make himself out to be both a thinker and a scholar. His claims to be considered such will not stand examination ; and anyone wishing to assure himself of this may be referred to M. Schoell, who has made the examination in his *L'humanisme continental en Angleterre*. On one point only I would disagree with M. Schoell : namely, with the suggestion that the nonsense Chapman sometimes writes is due, not only to his own failure to understand the text upon which he was working, but also to the nature of the texts themselves. ' *Quelle idée de prétendre vêtir de poésie la matière la plus rébarbative qu'ait distillée la scolastique byzantine ou médiévale !*' I do not know the medieval to whom M. Schoell is referring, who is Ficino ; but the Byzantine, who is Simplicius, is painstakingly, almost painfully clear. To have reduced him to such a confusion as is apparent in one or two of Chapman's poems implies ignorance of both his premises and his intentions. Between Ficino and Chapman I am willing to believe that the responsibility for nonsense rests with Chapman almost entirely.

In the sense in which anything worth reading is ' profound ' Chapman must of course be admitted to be so. But his title to the adjective in any stricter sense may perhaps be judged from the following passage. Picoté is seeking to persuade Byron to break his oath of allegiance to Henry.

> ' My lord, to wear your loyal habit still
> When it is out of fashion, and hath done
> Service enough, were rustic misery.
> The habit of a servile loyalty
> Is reckoned now amongst privations,
> With blindness, deafness, dumbness, silence, death.'

In scholastic terminology, a privation is the lack in a subject of a quality or a power necessary to its perfection, as in the eye of sight, or in an animal of life. The power, entering into the subject to perfect it, expels the privation :

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ' No true power doth admit privation
> Adverse to him ; nor suffers any fellow
> Joined in his subject.'

The argument is that, as loyalty is a privation, Byron is thereby prevented from becoming all that it is in him to be. The argument is admirably suited to its purpose, for Byron is above all vainglorious, and ready to believe that he has it in him to become anything. But Chapman ruins it ; for he makes Picoté remark about loyalty

> ' And so 'tis nothing ; what then can you lose?'

To say the least, this is an understatement ; for, if loyalty is nothing, it is in no way comparable to afflictions such as blindness and deafness ; and, if at all comparable to them, to lose it is not only to lose nothing, but to make a definite gain. Chapman has as a matter of fact confused the privation with the *flatus vocis*, or empty name:

> ' Your Excellency knows that simple loyalty,
> Faith, love, sincerity, are but words, no things.'

The confusion is one against which all beginners in scholastic philosophy must take warning, if they are to proceed ; obviously Chapman has not proceeded. Nor apparently has his common-sense rebelled against the inconsequence his fondness for the parade of learning has made him write.

Obscurity, the second of Chapman's supposed characteristics, is not easily dismissed ; for in its own nature it is somewhat obscure. It is possible perhaps to include within it the nonsense of which I have already accused Chapman. But from nonsense one expects no light, and it is I think best to reserve ' obscure ' for that from which light may be expected. It may of course be difficult, and it may take time, to decide whether a passage is obscure or nonsensical ; but that is no adequate reason for applying the adjectives indiscriminately. Within the obscure, as distinguished from the nonsensical, there are at least two sub-divisions: the one more properly called ' obscure,' the other much less so, if at all. The properly obscure is that associated with the term ' metaphysical,' and whose presence in Chapman I am concerned to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deny. It occurs throughout a complete poem or a play, as an atmosphere one might say or, in another figure, as a texture—whose consistent closeness for some time defies penetration. By its ubiquity within a work it is the sign of a mind, more skilled at least than the reader's in the simultaneous handling of numerous references, or in the simultaneous consideration of numerous relations ; of a mind, too, more than normally sensitive to situations of which such complexity can be predicated. Donne had a mind of this type, and so had Góngora. But closeness of texture is so far from being a permanent character of Chapman's work that the looseness commented on in the speech quoted by Mr. Eliot is far too common a fault. And when his work is at its best, it would be difficult to say what the texture is: for it fits so exactly to what it is intended to clothe that it escapes observation and so description. Chapman's verse, that is to say, has a self-effacing quality which, in my opinion, is one of the most remarkable things about it. Because of this quality I would call it, not only clear, but transparent: like good glass, looking through which as a medium one is not aware of looking through anything. This quality is difficult to illustrate by quotations, which would need to be of length. But I shall discuss it further before the end of this section.

The second sub-division of obscurity distinguishes itself in that its limits are not a whole poem or a play, but a line or a few consecutive lines, sometimes a single word. It can be compared, not to an atmosphere or a texture, but to a body foreign to the substance in which it is embedded. If obscurity occurs in Chapman, it is of this kind ; and it should be noted how insignificant it is. For it is a sign, not of a habit of mind in the author—an occasional tendency to carelessness is not a habit ; and if an author has a habit of carelessness, he is not worth reading—but of what may perhaps be called, in terms which it is not always safe to employ, a failure of one of the devices used to establish communication. Such a failure can be remedied by a mechanical operation, as a foreign body can be excised. Either Chapman's syntax can be clarified, or his vocabulary made more precise, or the reader's vocabulary extended. The pronouns are sometimes muddled, and have to be traced each to its appropriate antecedent ; or an ellipsis has to be filled. Or a common word,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

usually a verb like ' stick ' or ' take ' or ' lay,' has to be interpreted in a meaning more precise than it is normally held capable of bearing. In the third case exactly the opposite must happen ; for Chapman is as acutely sensitive to rare words, or to words in rare uses, as he is occasionally insensitive to common ones. The reader must be prepared with a knowledge of the scientific jargon of Chapman's day, and of English etymology and of archaisms. It is often overlooked how much more necessary this sort of knowledge is likely to be for the reading of an amateur of learning, like Chapman, than for that of a serious student. Hence a great deal of the talk about obscurity ; for Chapman is not read with sufficient care. In the following lines, for instance, the innocent archaism of ' let ' in the sense of ' hinder ' has tripped up an editor.

> ' You, that have made your way through all the guards
> Of jealous state, and seen on both your sides
> The pikes' points charging heaven to let you pass,
> Will you, in flying with a scrupulous wing
> Above these pikes to heavenward, fall upon them?
> This is like men that, spirited with wine,
> Pass dangerous places safe, and die for fear
> With thought of them, being simply sober.'

To mistake the archaism ruins an impressive passage. When the following lines have been read,

> ' Come, Siren, sing, and dash against my rocks
> Your ruffian galley, rigged with quench for lust,'

it has not always been remembered that in Italian a *ruffiano* is a pimp. It has not always been realized that, when Byron says to the Archduke, ' I now must move by your eminent will,' he is speaking the language, not of clumsy and idle courtesy, but of an exact science. All words like these certainly make Chapman not always an easy author to read ; but as I said the difficulties can be overcome mechanically—if only with the aid of the dictionary. They have about them little of the significance for criticism of ' obscurity.'

To return, then, to the ' transparency ' of verse. This quality has as either cause or consequent an apparent passivity in the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

author: who, it seems, having selected and arranged the world to be brought before us, retires from between us and that world, leaving it to make its own effect. If he has done his job well, it does so very much as does the world of which we are aware through the senses: it appears independent and complete, and full of things also independent and complete—each cut off from its neighbours, very obviously *things*. The following passages may make clearer what I mean:

> 'Yet shall you see it here. Here will be one
> Young, learned, valiant, virtuous and full manned;
> One in whom Nature spent so rich a hand
> That with an ominous eye she wept to see
> So much consumed her virtuous treasury.
> Yet as the winds sing through a hollow tree
> And (since it lets them pass through) let it stand:
> But a tree solid (since it gives no way
> To this wild rage) they rend up by the root:
> So this whole man
> (That will not wind with every crooked way
> Trod by the servile world) shall reel and fall
> Before the frantic puffs of wild-born chance
> That pipes through empty men and makes them dance.'

In spite of the formal metaphor at the close, what we have here is essentially a statement of proportion: as trees to wind, so men to chance. The trees remain quite distinct from the men: so much so, indeed, that the men assert their power of self-locomotion at an awkward moment, and the trees are so much trees that gallows-birds can be hanged upon them. And the gallows birds, though they once were alive, are kept distinct from the men: they are now corpses, and temporarily replace the trees as first term in the proportion. That is, in these lines there are two independent situations, one of which illustrates the other. Contrast a well-known passage from Donne or from Shakespeare, say:

> '. . . it is great
> To do that thing that ends all other deeds,
> Which shackles accident and bolts up change.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here accident having appeared in its proper nature, which is caprice, is immediately deprived of that nature and must submit to fetters. The poet, having created his world, intervenes to refashion it ; and his metaphor, transferring qualities from one substance to another and so calling into being a substance entirely new, is far from merely formal. That Shakespeare is a poet of metaphor is a commonplace ; in another paper I have tried to show that Donne is a poet of metaphor of a peculiar kind. Chapman, on the other hand, is a poet of similes ; a statement of proportion is a kind of simile. It is not only that, as is sometimes stated, he is fond of the ' epic simile ' ; for this may be a sort of extraneous ornament. If the important speeches in his plays are examined they will be found I think to contain a simile as an organic part: either as climax, to enforce the conclusion, or as the analogy which is the nerve of the argument. And similes by the way are never lacking to Chapman's invention, to illustrate any situation that may arise.

This habit of simile serves, I think, not only to distinguish Chapman from Donne and Shakespeare, but to establish his most important affinity. For, if the similes are successful—and I hope it will soon be apparent that they are—they imply in their creator at least two qualities, and render probable the presence of a third ; which, when taken together, define his genius fairly clearly. A simile has three elements: two objects or situations which are compared, and the quality common to both which is the basis of the comparison. If the simile is to survive it is necessary that the two objects be kept distinct ; the poet of similes must therefore be sensitive to objects as distinct, as independent substances, as individuals. He must be able to write sufficiently transparent verse, through which they can be exhibited like fishes in an aquarium. Or he must have—to quote an expression M. Schoell has already used of Chapman—*l'imagination puissamment concrète*. But, the more the two objects are kept distinct, the more obviously abstract their common quality will be ; for it will appear as something not existing in itself, but only *in* objects like the two that are compared. The poet of similes will have an eye therefore for abstract resemblances ; and the eye will be the more expert, the more numerous and diverse the realms it is accustomed to explore. The width of Chapman's erudition need not be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stressed ; if I have denied that his knowledge is profound, I have not denied that it is scattered. Mythology, history fabulous and authentic, geography more fabulous still, all furnish him with materials. But so does everyday life ; and it is here perhaps that his eye proves itself more acute. For long familiarity leads us to assume that things which are different for almost all our daily purposes are different in every respect ; and to break down this familiarity is an achievement. So also it is to see in a familiar object an essential quality of the Phœnix or of the Styx ; or in a familiar situation the essentials of a moral problem. This last leads to my third quality, which is this: objects drawn from diverse realms of knowledge will differ widely, but not as widely as those drawn from the different orders of experience, physical and moral. If the poet develops as far as possible his taste for identities hidden in diverse surroundings, this taste will become what M. Schoell calls '*le goût de la parabole*'—the taste for allegory and apologue. This is undoubtedly a quality of Chapman's, and some of his similes, by their combination of the plastic and the moral, have a proverbial force. Perhaps it is now apparent where I am tending: I have wished to suggest that, in the strangeness with which he can invest the familiar world, in the familiarity he finds in all worlds however strange, above all in his, as it were, instinctive recourse to allegory, Chapman is not wholly unlike Dante. The reputation for obscurity he has acquired makes this sound surprising ; but I think a case could be made out for him as the most Dantesque of English poets. I give a few quotations:

> '. . . like shallow streams
> That make themselves so many heavens to sight,
> Since you may see in them the moon and stars,
> The blue spaces of the air, as far from us
> To our weak senses, in their shallow streams
> As if they were as deep as heaven is high ;
> Yet with your middle finger only sound them
> And you shall pierce them to the very earth.'

> '. . . Slight my services? . . .
> And use me like no man, but as he took me
> Into a desert, gashed with all my wounds
> Sustained for him, and buried me in flies?'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'. . . a repulse
As miserably cold as Stygian water,
That from sincere earth issues, and doth break
The strongest vessels, not to be contained
But in the tough hoof of a patient ass.'

These three similes come from a single scene.

But the full test of my conclusions will be the reading, not of a handful of lines, but of a whole play. In such a reading I hope it will become apparent, as it seems apparent to me, that the essential Chapman is to be found not in the so-called obscurity ; not in the looseness by which his work is marred ; but in the piercing eye and the concrete imagination.

At this point I should like to illustrate what I consider the obvious suitability of Chapman's verse for drama: its suppleness, variety and unobtrusiveness combined with force. But the preliminary question would arise whether Chapman writes drama ; for, as I said at the beginning of the paper, that has been denied. I turn then to an examination of the plays as such. But there is one topic it will be as well to mention first: namely, Chapman's Senecanism—his Senecanism of style, I mean. This is an emphasis, which may easily appear an undue emphasis, on the simpler aspects of situations that are common in tragedy ; and the employment of such imagery as is found in Seneca. Frequently this imagery in Chapman is much entangled ; and as it has been held a plentiful source of obscurity, I should perhaps have considered it before. But I did not do so because it seemed to me the passages in which it occurs separate themselves quite easily from their context. It is as though in certain situations Chapman felt it necessary or proper to employ this imagery ; to tinge the otherwise almost colourless surface of his verse, as it were, with a little rouge. It would be interesting to enquire what exactly were these situations. But I have not had time to do so. I am convinced, however, that there are situations in the plays where the rouge is not only ornamental but useful ; and I shall notice one or two of them in the second part of the paper.

JAMES SMITH.

[The concluding part of this essay will appear in *Scrutiny* for June].

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

UNPUBLISHED POEMS BY ISAAC ROSENBERG

(1890 - 1918)

DURING his lifetime Isaac Rosenberg's poetry was published either in small pamphlets which he himself had printed or, rarely, in periodicals. After his death a large selection of his poetry was edited by Gordon Bottomley and published with an Introduction (including selections from Rosenberg's letters) by Laurence Binyon. This volume (*Poems*, Heinemann) was bought by a comparatively small number of people and is now, like the early pamphlets, unobtainable. A complete edition of his poetry, however, is to be published by Messrs. Chatto and Windus in the near future.

The following poems have either not been published before or have appeared only in the early pamphlets and were not included in *Poems*.

NONE HAVE SEEN THE LORD OF THE HOUSE.

Stealth-hushed, the coiled night nesteth
In woods where light has strayed ;
She is the shadow of the soul :—
A virgin and afraid,
That in the absent Sultan's chamber resteth,
Sleepless for fear he call.

Lord of this moon-dim mansion,
None know thy naked light.
O! were the day, of Thee dim shade,
As of the soul is night,
O! who would fear when in the bourne's expansion,
With Thy first kiss we fade.

But the sad night shivers,
And palely wastes and dies ;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A wraith under day's burning hair,
And his humid golden eyes.
He has browsed by immortal meadowed rivers ;
O! were she nesting there!

MIDSUMMER FROST.

A July ghost, aghast at the strange winter,
Wonders, at burning noon, (all summer seeming)
How, like a sad thought buried in light words,
Winter, an alien presence, is ambushed here.

See, from the fire-fountained noon, there creep
Lazy yellow ardours towards pale evening,
To thread dark and vain fire
Over my unsens'd heart.
Dead heat, no urgent summer can reach.
Hidden as a root from air or a star from day ;
A frozen pool whereon mirth dances ;
Where the shining boys would fish.

My blinded brain pierced is,
And searched by a thought, and pangful
With bitter ooze of a joyous knowledge
Of some starred time outworn.
Like blind eyes that have slinked past God,
And light, their untasked inheritance,
(Sealed eyes that trouble never the Sun)
Yet has feel of a Maytime pierced.
He heareth the Maytime dances ;
Frees from their airy prison, bright voices,
To loosen them in his dark imagination,
Powered with girl revels rare
And silks and merry colors,
And all the unpeopled ghosts that walk in words.
Till wave white hands that ripple lakes of sadness,
Until the sadness vanishes and the stagnant pool remains.
Underneath this summer air can July dream
How, in night-hanging forest of eating maladies,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A frozen forest of moon unquiet madness,
The moon-drunk haunted pierced soul dies ;
Starved by its Babel folly, lying stark,
Unvexed by July's warm eyes.

A FRAGMENT.

Surprise that stops sharp breath and things to touch
Giving a shape quite other to the eye
Form that refutes all sway chaos that coincides
Freedom manacled to passion overmuch
Chaos that coincides form that refutes all sway
Shapes to the eye quite other to the touch
All twisted things continue to our clay
Like other limbs and hair { dispreaded overmuch / loosened

NOON IN THE CITY.

Flame crowned and garmented
With robes that flaunt
The splash of gold he throws
About my feet,
He weaves above my head
A golden chaunt,
A song that throbs and glows
Thro' all the noon-day heat.

No Pan-pipe melodies
Of wind and boughs.
No tired wave's listless wash:
No silence deep
With spirit harmonies
Night only knows ;
No tender breaking flush,
Dawn's voice of dream-asleep.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But buildings glorified,
Whose windows shine
And show the heaven, while far
Down the throng'd street
Mingles man's song of pride
With the divine
Song of the day's great star
Struck from the noon-day heat.

LOVE AND LUST.

No dream of mortal joy ;
Yet all the dreamers die.
We wither with our world
To make room for her sky.

O lust! when you lie ravished,
Broken in the dust,
We will call for love in vain,
Finding love was lust.

AN EARLY DRAFT OF ' DAUGHTERS OF WAR.'

Space beats in vain the ruddy freedom of their limbs
In naked dances with man's spirit new bared
By the root side of the tree of life.
The old bark burnt with iron wars
They have blown to a live flame
To char the young green days.
We were satisfied of our Lords the moon and the sun
To take our wage of sleep and bread and warmth . . .
These maidens came . . . these strong everliving Amazons,
And in an easy might their wrists
Of night's sway and noon's sway the sceptres brake,
Clouding the wild . . . the soft lustres of our eyes.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Clouding the wild lustres, the clinging tender lights ;
Driving the darkness into the flame of day,
With the Amazonian wind of them
Over our corroding faces
That must be broken . . . broken for evermore
So the soul can leap out
Into their huge embraces.
Tho' there are human faces
Best sculptures of Deity
And sinews lusted after
By the Archangels tall
Even these must leap to the love heat of these maidens
From the flame of terrene days
Leaving grey ashes to the wind . . . to the wind.

One whose great lifted face,
Where wisdom's strength and beauty's strength
And the thewed strength of large beasts
Transfiguring lit,
Was speaking, surely, as the earth men's earth fell away ;
Whose new hearing drunk the sound
Where pictures lutes and mountains mixed
With the loosed spirit of a thought.

' My sisters force their males
From the doomed earth, from the doomed glee
And hankering of hearts.
Frail hearts stick up through the human quagmire and
lips of ash
Seem to wail, as in sad faded paintings
Far sunken and strange.

My sisters have their males
Clean of the dust of old days
That clings about those white hands,
And yearns in those voices sad,
But these shall not see them,
Or think of them in any days or years,
They are my sisters' lovers in other days and years.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A FRAGMENT OF PROSE.

The great poets of the earth have been manly intellects with a kind of coarseness engrained. At the most delicate and ephemeral beaminess, a sense of solidity and bulk impalpable and elusive only in a circle. We question a poet like Shelley because we feel this lack of robustness or manliness, where we do not question Keats or Donne or Blake. We ask in a poet a vigorous intellect, a searching, varied power, and detached and independent vision. We know our poem by its being the only poem. The world is too full of echoes and we seize on the real voice. Does it happen that the real voice is sometimes not heard or is mistaken for an echo? It does happen that the real voice, sickened by echoes and shy of its own song, withdraws and only calls to ears it is its delight to call to. Masters must need have the whole earth for their boughs to sing on or they burst their throats, but there are voices humbler in their demands but nowise less imperious in their result. That ebullition of the heart, that seeks in novel and exact metaphor to express it[self], the delicate but strong imagination that startles and suggests, the inward sanity that controls and directs—the mainspring of all true poetry—is Emerson's. Does he possess in any great degree—does he possess at all—that manly intellect, that solidity and bulk, which is the certificate of legitimacy to a great poet?

NOTES ON THE POEMS

For permission to publish these poems we are indebted to Mrs. I. Wynick, Isaac Rosenberg's sister.

NONE HAVE SEEN THE LORD OF THE HOUSE, from *Youth*, one of the early pamphlets. Rosenberg's compression of meaning is noticeable here, and the obscurity of the poem makes it permissible to offer a tentative gloss as an aid to the reader's first approach. Night is the shadow of the soul and the soul itself ; if we could believe that day was the shadow of God and of an eternal day, then our soul (the virgin) would not fear to be called by God and to fade into the day of eternity ; but night dies sadly and we can hardly believe that it goes to a place in the immortal day from which we still feel that our day must have come. These

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are of course only the simpler ideas torn crudely apart ; further readings show how subtly they are elaborated to enrich each other.

MIDSUMMER FROST, from *Youth*. An earlier and much briefer version of this poem is quoted in Laurence Binyon's Introduction to the *Poems*. It deals rather obscurely with a common preoccupation of Rosenberg's, the intuition of possibilities of life which seem to be beyond humanity, though they include the sensuous human satisfactions. Beneath the warmth of his response to ordinary life he feels a cold lack of response. This is pierced by his intuition of possibilities beyond those of humanity ; but these disappear in sadness, which in turn becomes stagnation (the equivalent here, apparently, of the coldness in the earlier part). The soul dies, starved by the ' Babel folly ' of being content with nothing less than the more than human humanity it had glimpsed.

A FRAGMENT. This exists only as a rough pencilled manuscript, evidently a first jotting.

NOON IN THE CITY, from *Youth*.

LOVE AND LUST, from *Youth*. Compression makes the first stanza obscure at first sight. It seems to mean: our dreams are never of mortal joy (lust), though we ourselves are mortal ; we let ourselves and our mortal desires wither through our devotion to more than mortal ideals (love).

DAUGHTERS OF WAR. A briefer and evidently earlier draft of what is often regarded as Rosenberg's finest war poem. The fuller version is, of course, included in *Poems*, and a comparison of the two suggests something of Rosenberg's way of working.

A FRAGMENT OF PROSE. This never got beyond the stage of rough manuscript, and a few obvious corrections of punctuation and spelling have been made for publication here. From a letter about Emerson, written in 1915 and quoted in *Poems*, one can get some idea of what he wanted to express in the second sentence of this fragment. ' There is always a kind of beaminess, like a dancing of light in light, in his poems.' It is an interesting example of Rosenberg's trying to catch an elusive thought by exploring among words.

D.W.H.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ASPECTS OF THE POETRY OF ISAAC ROSENBERG

I. Treatment of War Experience.

WHAT most distinguishes Isaac Rosenberg from other English poets who wrote of the last war is the intense significance he saw in the kind of living effort that the war called out, and the way in which his technique enabled him to present both this and the suffering and the waste as inseparable aspects of life in war. Further, there is in his work, without the least touch of coldness, nevertheless a certain impersonality: he tried to feel in the war a significance for life as such, rather than seeing only its convulsion of the human life he knew.

Occasionally, it is as well to say at once, he seems to simplify his experience too much, letting the suffering be swallowed up, though at his best he knows it never can be, in glory ; this happens in 'The Dead Heroes,' and to some extent in 'Soldier' and 'Marching.' By themselves these poems might have implied a lack of sensitiveness ; actually they were in him only one side of an effort after a more complete sensitivity. He could at least as easily have written only of loss and suffering:

> Here is one not long dead.
> His dark hearing caught our far wheels,
> And the choked soul stretched weak hands
> To reach the living word the far wheels said ;
> The blood-dazed intelligence beating for light,
> Crying through the suspense of the far torturing wheels . . .

The significance which the war held for Rosenberg might have been anticipated from his dissatisfaction with the pre-war social order (especially acute, it seems, in South Africa where he was living when the war came). The poem he wrote on first hearing of the war makes evident at once his deep division of feeling: on the one hand,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In all men's hearts it is:
Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould.

but also,

O ancient crimson curse!
Corrode, consume ;
Give back this universe
Its pristine bloom.

His dissatisfaction with pre-war life had already shown itself in his work, notably in the revolt against God which appears in several passages, God being taken as someone responsible for the condition of the world and its established order:

Ah, this miasma of a rotting God!

And of the rotting God and his priests he exclaims:

Who has made of the forest a park?
Who has changed the wolf to a dog?
And put the horse in harness?
And man's mind in a groove?

In ' Moses,' from which this passage comes, he was engrossed with the theme of revolt against a corrupting routine ; he presents Moses at the moment of breaking free from the comfort of the usual and politic by killing the overseer. Rosenberg never fully defined his attitude to violence as distinct from strength, though there is a hint in his letters that ' The Unicorn ' might have approached this question. In ' Moses ' he accepts violence because it seems a necessary aspect of any effort to bring back the power and vigour of purpose which he felt the lack of in civilized life:

I have a trouble in my mind for largeness.

It was because of this attitude to the pre-war world that Rosenberg, hating the war, was yet unable to set against it the possibilities of ordinary civilian life and regret those in the way, for instance, that Wilfred Owen could regret them in ' Strange Meeting.' When Rosenberg wanted to refer to an achieved culture—rather than merely human possibilities—against which to measure the work of war he had to go back to remote and idealized Jewish history,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

producing ' The Burning of the Temple ' and ' The Destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Hordes.' More usually he opposed both to war and to the triviality of contemporary civilization only a belief in the possibilities of life and a hope derived from its more primitive aspects:

> Here are the springs, primeval elements,
> The roots' hid secrecy, old source of race,
> Unreasoned reason of the savage instinct.

The root is the most important of the symbols which recur throughout his work, and birth, creation, and growth are his common themes.

These and related themes were to have been worked out in the unfinished play, ' The Unicorn.' But there they would have been influenced vitally by the war, and Rosenberg's account in letters of what he intends the play to be helps to reveal the significance of the war to him. The existing fragments point to his plan having changed more than once, but the letters show something of what he aimed at. The play was to have included a kind of Sabine rape by a decaying race who had no women and yearned for continuity:

> When aged flesh looks down on tender brood ;
> For he knows between his thin ribs' walls
> The giant universe, the interminable
> Panorama—synods, myths and creeds,
> He knows his dust is fire and seed.

At the same time he wanted the play ' to symbolize the war and all the devasting forces let loose by an ambitious and unscrupulous will ' (which might have been essentially the will of Moses seen in a slightly different light). Moreover, ' Saul and Lilith are ordinary folk into whose ordinary lives the Unicorn bursts. It is to be a play of terror—terror of hidden things and the fear of the supernatural.' It would, in fact, have been closely related to ' Daughters of War ':

> We were satisfied of our lords the moon and the sun
> To take our wage of sleep and bread and warmth—
> These maidens came—these strong everliving Amazons,
> And in an easy might their wrists

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of night's sway and noon's sway the sceptres brake,
Clouding the wild, the soft lustres of our eyes.

The complexity of feeling here, which would probably have been still more evident in ' The Unicorn,' is typical of the best of Rosenberg's war poetry. His finest passages are not concerned exclusively either with the strength called out by war or with the suffering: they spring more directly from the events and express a stage of consciousness appearing before either simple attitude has become differentiated. They express, that is, what it is tempting to call, inaccurately, a ' blending ' of the two attitudes. It can be seen in this:

None saw their spirits' shadow shake the grass,
Or stood aside for the half used life to pass
Out of those doomed nostrils and the doomed mouth,
When the swift iron burning bee
Drained the wild honey of their youth.

It is noteworthy here that Rosenberg is able and content to present contrasted aspects of the one happening without having to resort to the bitterness or irony which are the easier attitudes to such a contrast. One sign and expression of his peculiar greatness consists in his being able, in spite of his sensitiveness, to do without irony. The last two lines of the passage just quoted come from a keyed-up responsiveness to the vividness of violent death in war, but the passage possesses nothing of nationalist-militarist rapture ; it is ' the half used life ' that passes ; and then

Burnt black by strange decay
Their sinister faces lie,
The lid over each eye ;
The grass and coloured clay
More motion have than they,
Joined to the great sunk silences.

Rosenberg seems to have been specially impressed by the destruction of men at the moment of a simplified greatness which they could never have reached before, their destruction by the very forces that had made human strength and endurance more vividly impressive than ever. This conception of the war he tried to ex-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

press through the fiction of some intention being fulfilled in the destruction:

> Earth has waited for them,
> All the time of their growth
> Fretting for their decay:
> Now she has them at last!
> In the strength of their strength
> Suspended—stopped and held.

From this it was a short inevitable step to the suggestion of some vague immortality for these lives:

> What fierce imaginings their dark souls lit?
> Earth! Have they gone into you?
> Somewhere they must have gone,
> And flung on your hard back
> Is their souls' sack,
> Emptied of God-ancestralled essences.

'Daughters of War' develops the same group of ideas. 'Earth' gives place to the more active symbol of the Blakesque Amazonian spirits who take as lovers those who have been released from Earth,

> From the doomed earth, from the doomed glee
> And hankering of hearts.

The Daughters, their voices (as Rosenberg says in a letter) 'spiritual and voluptuous at the same time,' are a symbolic expression of what he felt ought to be a possible plane of living. They are an embodiment of the God-ancestralled essences, but he feels now that they can be reached only through the sacrifice of men's defective humanity, that they bring about 'the severance of all human relationship and the fading away of human love.' This was an idea that he had been feeling towards in 'Girl to Soldier on Leave.' It is only for warriors that the Daughters wait, for the simplification of living effort which Rosenberg saw in the war impressed him as a first step—a step back—towards the primitive sources of life, 'the root side of the tree of life.' Death in itself was not his concern, but only death at the moment when life was simplified and intensified; this he felt had a significance which he represents by immortality. For him it was no more than the immortality of the possibilities of life.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This immortality and the value he glimpses in the living effort of war in no way mitigate his suffering at the human pain and waste. The value of what was destroyed seemed to him to have been brought into sight only by the destruction, and he had to respond to both facts without allowing either to neutralize the other. It is this which is most impressive in Rosenberg—the complexity of experience which he was strong enough to permit himself and which his technique was fine enough to reveal. Naturally there were some aspects of the war which he was not able to compass in his response: maiming and lingering death he never treats of—he thinks only in terms of death which comes quickly enough to be regarded as a single living experience. Nevertheless the complexity he did achieve constituted a large part of his importance as a poet.

To say that Rosenberg tried to understand all that the war stood for means probably that he tried to expose the whole of himself to it. In one letter he describes as an intention what he obviously achieved: ' I will not leave a corner of my consciousness covered up, but saturate myself with the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life . . . ' This willingness—and ability—to let himself be new-born into the new situation, not subduing his experience to his established personality, is a large part, if not the whole secret of the robustness which characterises his best work. (' Robustness ' is, as the fragment on Emerson indicates, his own word for something he felt to be an essential of great poetry.) It was due largely, no doubt, to his lack of conviction, of the adequacy of civilian standards. In ' Troopship ' and ' Louse Hunting ' there is no civilian resentment at the conditions he writes of. Here as in all the war poems his suffering and discomfort are unusually *direct* ; there is no secondary distress arising from the sense that these things *ought not* to be. He was given up to realizing fully what *was*. He has expressed his attitude in ' The Unicorn ':

> Lilith: I think there is more sorrow in the world
> Than man can bear.
>
> Nubian: None can exceed their limit, lady:
> You either bear or break.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was Rosenberg's exposure of his whole personality that gave his work its quality of impersonality. Even when he imagines his brother's death he brings it into a poem which is equally concerned with the general destruction and the circumstances of life in war, and which ends with a generalization of his personal suffering:

> What are the great sceptred dooms
> To us, caught
> In the wild wave?
> We break ourselves on them,
> My brother, our hearts and years.

The same quality is present, most finely, in ' Break of day in the trenches ':

> The darkness crumbles away—
> It is the same old druid time as ever.
> Only a live thing leaps my hand—
> A queer sardonic rat—
> As I pull the parapet's poppy
> To stick behind my ear .
> Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
> Your cosmopolitan sympathies
> (And God knows what antipathies).
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
> Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
> Less chanced than you for life,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
> Drop, and are ever dropping ;
> But mine in my ear is safe,
> Just a little white with the dust.

There is here a cool distribution of attention over the rat, the poppy and the men which gives them all their due, is considerate of all their values, and conveys in their precise definition something of the impersonal immensity of a war. For Rosenberg the war was

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not an incident of his life, to be seen from without, but, instead, one kind of life, as unquestionable as any life.

II. Handling of Language.

Without attempting a systematic survey of Rosenberg's use of language, it is perhaps useful to discuss briefly one feature of his writing which must seem important even in a first approach to his work, partly because it contributes largely to his obscurity. It is that in much of his most interesting work he was only in a very special sense 'selecting words to express ideas.'

Usually when we speak of finding words to express a thought we seem to mean that we have the thought rather close to formulation and use it to measure the adequacy of any possible phrasing that occurs to us, treating words as servants of the idea. 'Clothing a thought in language,' whatever it means psychologically, seems a fair metaphorical description of most speaking and writing. Of Rosenberg's work it would be misleading. He—like many poets in some degree, one supposes—brought language to bear on the incipient thought at an earlier stage of its development. Instead of the emerging idea being racked slightly so as to fit a more familiar approximation of itself, and words found for *that*, Rosenberg let it manipulate words almost from the beginning, often without insisting on the controls of logic and intelligibility. An example of what happened occurs in the prose fragment on Emerson and the parallel phrase in a letter (published in this issue). In these he tries two ways of describing some quality that he feels in Emerson: at one time he calls it 'light dancing in light,' at another, trying to be more explicit and limit further the possible meanings of the phrase, he writes 'a beaminess, impalpable and elusive only in a circle.' The elements of this idea are apparently 'lightness' and 'elusiveness' and also 'endlessness, continuity within itself' of some kind, and these elements he feels also to be inseparable and necessary to each other.

He would of course have worked further on this before considering it finished. Much of the labour he gave to writing—and he is known to have worked extremely hard—was devoted, as his letters show, to making these complex ideas intelligible without sacrificing their complexity. 'Now, when my things fail to be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clear, I am sure it is because of the luckless choice of a word or the failure to introduce a word that would flash my idea plain, as it is to my own mind.' (*Poems*, p. 36). It is the creation of ideas which he takes to be his task as a poet ; speaking of the cause of the faults in his poems he insists (*Poems*, pp. 37-38) that it is not ' blindness or carelessness ; it is the brain succumbing to the herculean attempt to enrich the world of ideas.' And he is reported to have worked constantly towards concentrating more and more *sense* into his poetry, disturbed at the thought of thinness or emptiness. But how remote this was from implying any respect for mere intellectual exercising in verse is evident not only from his poetry but also from his own description of what he aimed at: poetry ' where an interesting complexity of thought is kept in tone and right value to the dominating idea so that it is understandable and still ungraspable.' (*Poems*, p. 33).

It remains ' ungraspable '—incapable of formulation in slightly different terms—because Rosenberg allowed his words to emerge from the pressure of a very wide context of feeling and only a very general direction of thought. The result is that he seems to leave every idea partly embedded in the undifferentiated mass of related ideas from which it has emerged. One way in which this effect came about was his rapid skimming from one metaphor to another, each of which contributes something of its implications—one can't be sure how much—before the next appears. A clear example—though not his best as poetry—occurs in ' Moses ' :

> Fine! Fine!
> See, in my brain
> What madmen have rushed through
> And like a tornado
> Torn up the tight roots
> Of some dead universe:
> The old clay is broken
> For a power to soak in and knit
> It all into tougher tissues
> To hold life ;
> Pricking my nerves till the brain might crack
> It boils to my finger-tips,
> Till my hands ache to grip

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The hammer—the lone hammer
> That breaks lives into a road
> Through which my genius drives.

The compression which Rosenberg's use of language gave him is therefore totally unlike the compression of acute conversation—such for example as some of Siegfried Sassoon's verse offers—in which a highly differentiated idea is presented through the most effective *illustration* that can be found. Rosenberg rarely or never illustrated his ideas by writing ; he reached them through writing.

With this as his attitude to language it is not surprising that he should have had the habit of reworking phrases and images again and again, developing out of them meanings which were not ' the ' meaning he had originally wanted to ' express ' with them. Emerging, as they seem to have done, from a wide context of feeling, his more interesting images carried with them a richer or subtler meaning than Rosenberg could feel he had exhausted in one poem, and he would therefore use them again in another. This happened with ' Heights of night ringing with unseen larks,' a phrase that first reports an actual incident during the war, and is then used by the Nubian in ' The Unicorn ' to contrast the mystery-exploiting femininity of his own girls with the vividness of Lilith :

> Our girls have hair
> Like heights of night ringing with never-seen larks,
> Or blindness dim with dreams :
> Here is a yellow tiger gay that blinds your night.

Moreover in the first of these poems he had said that the dropping of the larks' song when death might as easily have dropped was

> Like a blind man's dreams on the sand
> By dangerous tides ;
> Like a girl's dark hair, for she dreams no ruin lies there . . .

It is this reworking of images—developing first one set of possibilities and then another—which gives one the impression of Rosenberg's having as it were modelled in language.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The idea of a sack for the soul is similarly reworked and developed. It occurs twice in 'Moses': first simply, 'we give you . . . skin sacks for souls,' as a contemptuous description of the Hebrew slaves; then the soul sack becomes the body and the habits of ordinary life to be thrown off in Moses' spiritual development:

> Soul-sack fall away
> And show what you hold!

And finally the emptiness and collapsedness of the sack allows it to be used of the bodies of the dead flung on the earth:

> And flung on your hard back
> Is their souls' sack,
> Emptied of God-ancestralled essences.

'God-ancestralled essences' in turn reappears in 'The Unicorn' where they are said to be contaminated by

> . . . . a crazed shadow from no golden body
> That poisons at the core
> What smiles may stray.

The obscurity of this is relieved if one sees that it comes from an earlier poem beginning,

> Crazed shadows, from no golden body
> That I can see . . .

and ending,

> And poison at the core
> What smiles may stray.

That poem deals with evil abroad at night—shadows forming without any 'golden body' as source of light—and in 'The Unicorn' the ideas have been remodelled so as to suggest the humdrum middle-aged evil of Saul which is mauling Lilith's love and beauty.

All this may only amount to saying that when Rosenberg got a good phrase he tried to make the most of it, though it equally suggests what an interesting process making the most of a phrase may be. Naturally, too, it need not be supposed that Rosenberg was unique or even—among poets—very unusual in treating language in this way. What is unusual, however, is his willingness

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to publish several uses of the same phrase or image (and there are many more instances than I have quoted), so that what may be a fairly common process is, in Rosenberg's work, available for examination. Moreover, although the process may be familiar in the writing of poetry, it is by no means usual in ordinary language, and there can be no doubt that it has special significance as a means of exploring and ordering the affective sources from which we draw our more manageable mental life.

D. W. HARDING.

MUSICAL HISTORY

BURKE once declared that he did not know how to draw up an indictment against a whole nation. Yet we daily meet people who are less diffident ; and we ourselves must confess that in artistic matters we often fall into the same loose habit. We describe one nation as more musical than another on the slenderest of evidence. One generation is played off against another in the same casual way, the only profit being to those particularly stupid and dangerous conservatives who believe that there is really nothing new under the sun.

The further a period of history recedes the simpler it appears. Our own times we know from direct experience to be complicated and to nourish many conflicting generalizations. But of the past we know only a limited number of facts, and professional historians have had leisure to piece them together into a traditionally accepted picture. Instead of a direct knowledge of a large number of particular cases, the mention of a past age summons up a blurred vision we call a ' musical ' or ' unmusical ' period.

The weighing of evidence that originally produces such a picture is the business of the historian. Too often, however, we cannot help feeling that even the literary or musical historian has too rigid a notion of what constitutes ' fact,' and in consequence neglects much that should properly be regarded as relevant evidence. The historian has no right to leave behind as impedimenta the experiences that make him sensitive to literature or music ; and this might seem too obvious a condition to be stated

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did we not see in the standard histories little more than a collection of biographical details or a catalogue of the technical resources that have gradually built up the modern artist's stock of materials. He must not forget that art is a handling of material with a purpose, nor must he omit to look for the purposes behind the technique he is studying. But these purposes themselves are part of a highly complex situation in which not only the artist as a person is involved but also the artist as a member of a society. Indeed it is the latter that is chiefly involved in a history of a period, the former belonging more properly to the detailed study of an individual writer. Such study of a period means more than a mixture of statistical sociology and biographical literary talk ; it implies something much more akin to original literary creation. It is more than merely collecting facts from forgotten books and music that is never played. The historian who tells us something of first importance is the one who has placed his historical facts beside his own experience as a member of a complex social organism, and whose history is born from a union of the two lines of experience. Too much historical research at present is vitiated not by lacking a sense of the past but by lacking a sense of the present. The researcher must learn to live in the period he has chosen, to enter into the emotions of the real people who produced artistic work ; but he must not use his imagined existence as an escape from his actual one. The only value of historical research is after all to enrich and provide standards for the historian's contemporaries. One of the worst suspicions of a historian should be indifference to contemporary work: if he cannot comprehend his own environment, how can he hope to comprehend one he knows only at second hand? Of course, this does not argue for a re-arrangement of the past in terms of the present. The historian must relate two periods without confusing them. He must, indeed, learn to live equally intelligently in two periods. If he generalizes about his chosen period more rashly than about his own, he is a bad historian ; if he cannot use his contemporary experience for studying and responding to the works of the past, he is inadequately equipped for living in or understanding either period.

It will be generally agreed that the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were an exceptionally musical people.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The statement has been so often repeated that no one ever scrutinizes the evidence on which it is based. Yet the difficulty of making such an assertion appears at once if we ask ourselves, Do we in the twentieth century live in a musical period? Such a generalization about a period in which we ourselves are taking part nonplusses the most glib historians. We reply that many are musical and many are not, and we probably go on to say that the same is true of any period, only perhaps more people were musical in the seventeenth century than now. So vague a reply, however, will not sound very cogent. Indeed it is an evasion of the questions at issue. What we have to decide is the part played by music in the lives of ordinary people as members of a society and its relation to their other activities. No numbering of musical people (even if we could fix a standard of musical proficiency that would remain always constant) would be of any value as a comparison between the two periods or as a description of the seventeenth century.

Mr. Percy Scholes's book[1] raises the question we have been discussing in reference to that very period. He seeks to prove that the accepted view of the Puritans as enemies of music is a libel, and to do so he relies on the standard lines of evidence. The most obvious method of proving a period musical has been the accumulation of a large number of specific instances of prominent persons showing proficiency or interest in music. Mr. Scholes does this very satisfactorily. He succeeds in showing that Cromwell and many other Puritan leaders were deeply sensitive to music, and he urges that when prohibition of musical activity occurred it was due not to dislike of music in itself but to its association with various abuses. This seems exceedingly likely: for the moment, however, we are concerned with the deeper issue of the extent of musical influence in the period as a whole, and we suggest that if such an influence can be shown to be deep and significant the Puritan leaders fit naturally into the general life of their period and their own attitude becomes more understandable. In facing this issue Mr. Scholes' evidence has every right to be heard. His line of proof has indeed been used by other historians for the sixteenth century too. Much play has been made with the skill and

[1] *The Puritans and Music*, by P. A. Scholes (Oxford University Press, 21/-).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taste of the Tudors as musicians, and the nobility of that time has been found to be astonishingly adept at performance and exceedingly generous as patrons. It may be objected—I believe it has been—that there have always been patrons of music among the aristocracy and that families like the Kytsons should not be allowed to over-awe us. Certainly they should not ; yet let us only glance at our own aristocracy. The most zealous tory could scarcely allege that the strange personages who adorn *The Sketch* are great benefactors of music, and the cause of monarchy must by now have many more enthusiastic supporters than musicians. The validity of such an argument for the high place of music in Elizabethan society, however, only appears when we consider with individual records the patterns and models of the society in our period and in theirs. The model is not the actual ; but a glance at *Punch* should correct the balance. Lip-service to the ideal of a public man with taste is at least different from the arrogant philistinism that characterizes the mass product of the public schools ; and in such an argument standards have a right to be heard. In this connection we may recall Jane Austen's most scathing criticism of a person, that she had no conversation, and beside it put a description of the heroine of a novel, such as this, which may with advantage be compared with the descriptions of heroines in our own best-sellers: ' . . . she had a great deal of wit, read much, and retained all that served her purpose. She sang delicately, and danced well, and played on her lute to a miracle.' (Aphra Behn). It is noteworthy that in Sidney's *Arcadia* all the characters are made familiar with music and able to turn a song on almost any instrument. Evidently the qualities valued by the aristocratic society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included music much more emphatically than those our own writers have taught us to admire.

Mr. Scholes makes very effective use of the allusions to music in the literature of the time. This is certainly a very safe clue to the temper of a period, provided we can accept the man of letters as a typical member of a society. Most historians, however, and Mr. Scholes among them, merely catalogue references in various writers. This can give only the most general guide to the musical life of a period. The defects of the eighteenth century writers, for example, may be only a series of personal accidents,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for England was certainly full of music when Handel decided to make a home here. We are on safer ground in comparing the Victorian writers with the Elizabethan, for the Elizabethan audience would have ridiculed the loose employment of musical terms that the Victorians found sufficient. Only Browning among the Victorian poets (I exclude Hopkins, who is not spiritually a Victorian) seems to have had the faintest idea what he was talking about when he referred to music. Whereas Spenser's fairy world has its music exactly stage-managed (the birds sing mean and counter-tenor), Shelley's music is always unearthly ; it has neither clearly defined quality nor specific source. Shakespeare can not only play neatly and surely on technical terms, but when he wishes to describe a piece of music or a musical effect he can give a concrete notion of it based on his own musical experience ; and all the songs of the Elizabethans are admirably constructed for setting to the particular musical forms of the day. This is connected with the general question of romantic vagueness ; and probably more profit could be derived from a study of the place of music in Elizabethan imagery. The superiority of the sixteenth and seventeenth century writers over any other lies in their conveying an actual sense experience. When Herbert declares ' My music shows you have your closes ' it is not the technical term that interests us so much as the unforced aptness of such a comparison, calling forth the ' dying ' cadences of a perfectly blended madrigal, where the voices sink gently from the last soft suspension to the last chord with its sharp third. The readiness of the Elizabethans to make musical comparisons is an indication of the variety and reality of their own musical experience and its importance in the mass of impressions that give a poet his individual equipment.

Moreover we may notice that it is not only one class of writers who use musical terms freely. Nashe, who wrote for anybody that could read, uses them as freely as the poets who wrote for a restricted circle. Here obviously we have a more important line of evidence than any of those already mentioned, for we are driven to ask how it was that the dramatists and pamphleteers could presume an adequate knowledge of music in an audience so variously recruited as the one they served. And to answer this we can only consult the habits of the different classes in the community. The other lines of evidence have considerable cumulative value, but

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the last resort the crucial question for a musical historian must be how people spent their working and leisure hours. Only so can we discover whether the average person's condition was such as to make good music a regular part of his life.

It is easy to show that sanitary arrangements in Elizabethan times were unsatisfactory and that there was much to be desired according to the Victorian standards of conduct ; but these surface details have very little to do with musical or literary questions, and from the musician's point of view it would be unwise to base any theory of progress on the ordinary data of the sociologist. What is interesting to the musical historian is that the England which the Industrial Revolution smoked out was, in a sense we can scarcely understand, a community rather than a collection of classes ; a community fed by tradition and bound together by authority. The difference between the London of Shakespeare and the London of the suburban era is exemplified by the frequent personal references, allusions to local characters in all the writers from Jonson to Deloney. But even London, the only really large town, contained but a fraction of the population. The majority lived either in small towns or on the land. Their life was a satisfying one governed by the rhythms of the soil or devoted to the crafts mass production has killed. It was a full life and a healthy one. It drew all classes together. The apprentice, who would one day be a master, lived in the family of his master, and the servants even in a large household were members of the family too. The village community could live to itself, and the landlord class, as we see from Sir Roger de Coverley and Squire Weston, represented something more intimate than the term landlord suggests to-day. Everybody had his station, but all were equally members of a community, a crude one in many ways but still one bound together by something deeper than propagandist appeals to mass psychology.

This organic community had traditional ways of filling its leisure in which music played a very large part. The rustics Cecil Sharpe found were very far from being bores ; on the contrary he was impressed by their natural courtesy and poise. Folk-song was a heritage of all classes, and the virginalists and song writers up to Purcell built on it as Defoe built on the vigorous speech idiom of his day. The ballad opera of the eighteenth century shows that the tradition was active even then, at a time when there were

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no English composers of the first rank to carry on the work of Purcell. Thus there was no cleavage between the musical background of the educated and that of the illiterate, and a constant inter-change refreshed both levels. The country dance spread to aristocratic circles abroad (Lady Mary Wortley Montague criticized the ' contre-danses ' she saw in Vienna) and Playford's town-made dances were absorbed by the people as a whole. Standards were set from above but had no difficulty in filtering down to the people. And that the tradition was not deadening but highly intelligent is evidenced in the enormous success of Handel in this country. Professor Dent has recently been reminding us that he brought an entirely new kind of Italian music to England and that ' Handel's London operas must have affected their audiences almost in the way in which the operas of Wagner startled the audiences of the nineteenth century.' Yet his style soon became the standard of Dr. Burney's circle and the *Messiah* a genuinely national possession.

What finally submerged this deep-set musical culture was not alien influence: eighteenth century England had vitality enough to absorb Handel and remain English. The *Messiah* tradition went on, and in even as late as Thomas Hardy we catch glimpses of the last folk-traditions of the villages. But nothing was feeding the tradition and the nation had been divided. The Industrial Revolution uprooted people from traditional ways of life and destroyed the sense of a community. How great the change was cannot be better illustrated than in the words of a Leicester potter who lived through it. In his *Music and Friends* (1822) William Gardiner looks back regretfully to the days before the coming of machinery. In those days ' the artisans had their amusements at home. They were members of the village choir and on the Wake Sunday everyone that had a voice and could lend a hand with the hautboy, bassoon or flute repaired to the singing loft in the Church to swell with heart and voice the psalm or anthem. Those harmless recreations were for everyone.' ' At Christmas the choir of Shepsted with voices and instruments took circuit round the town and performed the carols at the principal houses and sang also the best of our English glees.' This is all very similar to the picture Hardy gives for a purely agricultural district in *Under the Greenwood Tree.* After giving other instances of artisan music Gardiner continues: ' How changed are the circumstances of this class of society. Since

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the introduction of machinery, which in every case lowers the price of labour, the slow hand is obliged to be increasingly at work to provide for his family . . . There is no leisure for music, and in place of the violin and flute at the wake you have nothing now but noise and vulgarity with swearing and drunkenness . . . That simplicity of character which the same people possessed (before coming into the towns) is now gone, and were it not for efforts made to educate them they would soon be found in a state of complete demoralization.'

When we come to the twentieth century we have added to these mechanical distractions commercialized exploitation of rhythm and sentimentality for their own sakes, combined with ways of using leisure that leave little energy or place for music. Instead of being at the head of a homogeneous traditional community the minority who can be bothered to understand either classical or modern music is a despised and scattered remnant. We have only to compare the reception Handel had in England with the outburst of fury that follows the broadcast of modern chamber music to perceive the change that has taken place. There are indeed those who point to the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* and are proud of the increase in the number of concerts, or to the enthusiasm of the 'Proms.' They do not mention that scarcely any musical society in the country pays. I happen to be living in a city with a population of a quarter of a million that has not a single orchestra of its own. We must face the fact that music to the vast majority means the inanities of a jazz band or a cinema organ; to the musical 'middle-brow' it means only watered-down versions of the classics, and one wonders how deep goes appreciation of these when one sees the absolute incapacity to listen to the simplest modern works. But the worst symptom of all is the appalling growth of mechanical music. The artisans we have just mentioned made their own music; the enlightened modern prefers to turn on the wireless and go on talking. So a means of spreading music is turned for most into a poison spray on all musical effort.

The fruits of such a society are already becoming apparent. The ignorant attacks of the Nazis on Hindemith differ only in expression from the attacks constantly being made on the musician in this country. No composer with sensibility can now hope to reach more than a tiny part of the population. The vast majority

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will go on demanding more of the music that requires no listening and will rapidly become incapable of listening. Performing music will become more and more of a mystery and less and less people will have the creative outlet that singing or playing together brings. What is still more serious, the modern musician will find it more and more difficult to find a language to act as his medium. There is virtually no national music in England now, and it is significant that nobody can follow up Vaughan Williams' attempt to find the English tradition. When Bartok and Sibelius have gone as far as they can with the material their national music affords and with what their own genius devises, the problem of melody will remain as acute as ever, because the modern composer will have to create what the Elizabethans found ready to hand. And the results will not be confined to music itself. A weakening of general response to music, an isolation of the musician and a commercialized appeal to the most sensual abuses of sound will prove one of the best allies of the press and the novel and the cinema in lowering the emotional vitality of the people.

These are the problems with which the musical historian is most seriously concerned. The safeguarding of tradition and the maintenance of standards as well as criticism of the works of the past should be his constant concern ; just as ' standards of living ' are the concern of all who care for music as more than a method of filling an embarrassing silence. His interest is most truly musical when it has a wider scope than music ; and, though he must never neglect detailed analysis of actual music, his work should be of importance to those who are considering other things than music.

BRUCE PATTISON.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

THE TIMES IN SCHOOL

When the *Morning Post* ('Independent of anyone or anything') describes itself as 'The Paper with a Soul—the Paper that fights for what every decent Englishman wants,' it is what one expects. And we are accustomed to advertisers arrogating educational powers. But it is a little surprising to find the *Times* lining up, and making for itself the claims which are set forth in its pamphlet *The Times in School*. 'It is a common-place,' we are told, 'to deplore the influence of sensational journalism upon young minds.' They should be trained 'in the use of a journal which adheres strictly to its primary function.' And there follow a few tenuous pages of suggestions for the use of the *Times* in school, flavoured with platitudes and clichés about 'the busy world of reality' (the writer was evidently bored with his job). It is worth making some quotations.

If newspapers are to be of use in schools, the copywriter continues, they 'must be fair as well as accurate, maintain a due sense of proportion, be written in a good temper as well as good English . . . Competing interests must be put in proper perspective; political animosity and partisan spite, self-advertising and axe-grinding must be eliminated; news must be reliable and informative; comment must be impartial, considered and responsible.' But as everyone knows, there *are* exceptions to the *Times's* fairness and accuracy—real impartiality being precluded by the assumptions it has to make, however good its intention may sometimes be. Its information from Russia is a common butt: it is always ready to publish circumstantial accounts from 'that hotbed of scandalous mendacity, Riga.' It constantly twists rather than falsifies news; the 'reporting' of a speech by Stalin a day before the account was released in Russia is an exceptional feat perhaps. Of course there are plenty of friends of Soviet Russia in England to collect specimens of this bias,[1] but if it is not reliable

[1]See *Anti-Soviet Lies*, by W. P. Coates. Labour Research Department, 60 Doughty Street, London, W.C.1.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

here, how can it be trusted on other topics where prejudice is likely to work, and where it is more difficult to keep check? The effect of such policy upon public opinion and its repercussions upon international relations are deplorable and may be disastrous—witness the shocking display after the arrest of the Vickers engineers, when the folly of the Government and its mouthpiece nearly precipitated a first-class crisis. Apart from this the *Times's* air of shocked righteousness was comic—it persisted in referring to the 'Trial' in inverted commas—and hardly consistent with 'good temper.' Something of what the *Times* means by impartiality may perhaps be gathered from the remarks it made the other day about the 'partisan investigation' of Professor Tawney's committee into the text-books used in L.C.C. schools. The existing text-books, it implied, are all free from bias. For extracts from a few impartial text-books ('All that was best in the young manhood of Italy rallied to the side of Mussolini'; 'The whole nation rallied to the Government in the interests of law and order, and the General Strike was withdrawn after a few days') we refer to the editorial article, 'Complete Impartiality,' in the *New Statesman and Nation* for January 19th.

Later on the pamphlet assures us that the *Times* is a guide to 'clear, accurate, concise and fluent English' and that 'there is hardly a leader or a contributed article which could not serve as a model for a Sixth Former engaged in preparing an essay.' Some of the *Times* reporting, where it can afford to be disinterested, is very good. But its leaders? On occasions such as the anniversary of Armistice Day it serves up the same sterile commonplaces, indefatigably perpetuates the same outworn and inapplicable attitudes; and on any issue where its prejudices are engaged it produces smokescreens of verbiage and shoddy, disingenuous thinking: some of its remarks on the recent Peace Ballot were in tone and feeling at the level of the *Daily Express*. Its leaders, however, have a use in school: they are a source of excellent matter for practical criticism, for determining the Intention, describing the Feeling, for estimating the quality of a mentor by the texture of his prose. For specimen analysis, see Mr. Read's *English Prose Style*; and one of the best parts of Mr. Milne's *Peace with Honour* is his devastating examination of a *Times* leader, exposing its wicked complacency, its woolly and misleading 'thought.' This book, to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

digress a moment, has been criticized, and justly, on the ground of simplification. But there is a place for simplifications—for the young in years and mentality. And Mr. Milne's book may reach the audience which needs it, unlike other excellent pacific tracts. Its earnest and persuasive tone might win over even readers of the *Morning Post*. It is to be hoped that a majority of those who were brought up as Christopher Robins will come across the later book ; the section I've mentioned, and the exposure of ' statesmanship ' are a practical contribution to education.

The pamphlet further reminds us that the Press has ' extreme importance and incalculable influence in national and daily life as the chief disseminator of information and . . . the pre-eminent former and mouthpiece of public opinion.' If the *Times* is to be used in school, its readers may be asked what influence is likely to be exerted in another national emergency, strike or war, by an organ which on August 5th, 1914, said, ' We are going into a war that is forced upon us as the defenders of the weak and the champions of the liberties of Europe.' And for other quotations showing how the *Times* did its duty in working up the case for poor little Serbia, see Lord Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime*.

' Pupils should be told in particular that an editor's duty is to see that accuracy permeates the whole organization, and something of the extraordinary lengths to which he will go to secure and maintain it . . . ' etc., etc. Pupils should also be asked in particular how far was the *Times* scrupulous in publishing atrocity stories during the war ; and then whether it is possible to accept without reservation the accounts of atrocities alleged to have been committed by the Spanish rebels more recently ; and finally why this newspaper is tendentious, and in what directions.

' The responsible newspaper . . . is a means for preserving an all-round attitude of mind in students whose work involves a high degree of specialization . . . assists in forming a critical attitude of mind.' Since the *Times* assumes such airs, one is justified in complaining not only that its news is imperfect and its comment official, but also that outside politics it is no more use towards forming a ' critical attitude ' than any other London daily. And its scale of values, whereby an air race is important, is not on the positive side much superior to that of worse papers. The ideas and attitudes promoted by the leading articles are not so

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

very different from those which appear in Callisthenes' daily advertisements—these provide a convenient example of the apotheosis of the business ethos and are a constant source of matter for dissection in school. ('The science of advertising at its best,' our author remarks, 'can be studied in the advertisement columns.') 'A century and a half have carried us high into the realms of civilization. During the interval what has not science accomplished for the comfort of man—what have the spread of intelligence, the labour of missionaries—sacred and profane—the intercommunication of thought, the better understanding of nations and classes—not wrought for his happiness? To dwell upon human progress during the last hundred and fifty years is to behold at a glance the spoils of as noble a victory as ever rewarded patient endurance, unflinching energy and heroic devotion.' That appeared in the *Times* eighty-five years ago, but the idiom, a trifle deflated, still survives: the correspondent who reported the failure of the Spanish rising permitted himself to hope that 'politics in the rich district of the Asturias will henceforth flow in the peaceful channels of progress.' Probably the nearest to a social conscience that the *Times* can produce in its reader is a feeling that the countryside ought to be preserved. But without assistance he would find the *Times* no help towards an understanding of the civilizing process, of which the defiling of the countryside is merely a symptom.

Everyone finds the *Times* useful, and we should be grateful for a news-sheet which does supply news. But it is time to whisper wolf when it allows its advertising department to misrepresent it like this, with the idea of exploiting the good intentions of the enlightened, 'progressive' schoolmaster, aware that part of his work is to educate against the industrial climate. That this is the public the pamphlet is trying to get at is proved by its reference on the first page to *Culture and Environment*, and the suggestion that the schoolmaster will find an aid to forming a 'critical awareness' in the *Times*, presented as an impartial organ, etc., etc. There is some danger that the teacher who has not the opportunity to investigate the *Times* may present it to his pupils as an ideal medium for news and comment, with results not good for their education. It isn't subject to the whims of a megalomaniac: but it is obviously a Government mouthpiece, perhaps with a more intimate connection than we are allowed to know. Information

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like that published in the *Week* (No. 77) is not often available—it was alleged that the Vickers agent and the *Times* correspondent at Bucharest were one and the same person. Nor is the list of directors reassuring. Besides seven individual directors, there are seven other directories held by twenty-three assorted banks, assurance companies, railways, etc. This list, and the figures for the excess preference dividends since the war, colour the charge that the *Times* is an organ of ' capitalist propaganda '—that is, a paper which profits by and helps to preserve the *status quo*.

If the *Times* did not pretend to be other than it is, there would be no need to grumble. But this specious pamphlet seems a particularly dishonest perversion of education—that is, if it succeeds in insinuating itself into the schools and bringing up a generation of *Times* readers in the interests of circulation.

DENYS THOMPSON.

DR. RICHARDS, BENTHAM AND COLERIDGE

COLERIDGE ON IMAGINATION, by I. A. Richards (Kegan Paul, 8/6).

I admire and revere Coleridge and I am in favour of thinking about poetry—in favour, more generally, of applying intelligence to literature. I should like to have said that in these respects at least I was at one with Dr. Richards. But even if I had started reading without premonitions I should very early in this book have conceived a doubt whether Dr. Richards's Coleridge would turn out to be mine, or whether the relation between thinking and poetry promoted by Dr. Richards would be one I could be happy about. To be fair, I had better say at once that we differ, I think, less essentially about the nature of Coleridge's greatness than about the ways of applying intelligence to poetry: Dr. Richards's admiration for Coleridge and his use of him seem to me to be quite unrelated—or to have, merely, a relation such that, contemplating it, we (to borrow a characteristic phrase of Dr. Richards's) inevitably adopt a diagnostic attitude.

The doubts I should, even as a reader innocent of earlier

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

acquaintance with Dr. Richards's work, have conceived would have taken disturbing forms and proportions by the time I had read the reference to Mr. Eliot that begins at the bottom of p. 3. If anyone may be said to have been for our time what Coleridge was for his, then it is Mr. Eliot. Mr. Eliot, like Coleridge, combined a creative gift with rare critical intelligence at one of those moments in poetic history when (if we can think of it as being sometimes otherwise), except in conjunction with rare critical intelligence, there could hardly be a prosperous creative gift—certainly not one capable of important achievement. To have improved the situation for other poets is an achievement of decided importance, and, by his poetry and his criticism together, it is Mr. Eliot's: if, as Dr. Richards thinks, we are living in, or on the point of living in, a Poetic Renaissance, that is to Mr. Eliot's credit in ways for which students of the Romantic movement will provide the parallels.

Though observant already of a tendency in Dr. Richards to be less generous towards Mr. Eliot than Mr. Eliot is habitually towards him,[1] I was nevertheless surprised when, on p. 3, I read this:

> 'But I must delay first for a few pages to complain of the very common and rather lazy assumption that intellectual labour will not help the critic. I will quote from Mr. Eliot an example of what has become a general custom among literary men in discussing Coleridge. "Nor am I sure," he says, "that Coleridge learnt so much from German philosophers, or earlier from Hartley, as he thought he did; what is best in his criticism seems to come from his own delicacy and subtlety of insight as he reflected upon his own experience of writing and poetry." (*The Use of Poetry*, p. 80). Yes. But is it an accident that this very peculiar kind of insight is found in Coleridge? His philosophic preoccupations cannot be separated from it. The speculations and the insight incessantly prompt one another.'

[1]Those who hoped that the Intention conveyed by the bracketing, noted in these pages by D. W. Harding (see *Determinations*, p. 238), of Mr. Eliot with Max Eastman and Irving Babbitt was not intended will have been painfully convinced by the time they have read the last chapter of the present book.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This already, I am afraid, will be judged to be subtle in an uncomplimentary sense of the term: the sentence quoted from Mr. Eliot does not justify—and does not any the more because of the ensuing reasonable commentary—the imputing to him of the 'lazy assumption that intellectual labour will not help the critic.' But when the commentary, having discoursed through a couple of paragraphs on the relation between Coleridge's philosophic preoccupations and his criticism, concludes: 'Is there not something a little ridiculous in saying, "What a fine critic! What a pity he thought so hard about Poetry!"?'—well, one can only hope that Dr. Richards hadn't noticed what kind of cue this would inevitably appear to the reader (who may take it, or not). In any case, one reminds oneself that, though there are no doubt different ways of thinking profitably about poetry, Mr. Eliot's best criticism stands as an exemplar and a criterion of rigour, relevance and purity of interest—a criterion that very little writing about poetry can afford to challenge.

Actually, the effect of Dr. Richard's book (in my opinion) is to justify Mr. Eliot's judgment. Indeed, even in conscious intention, Dr. Richards might seem again and again to corroborate —or, at any rate, to be insisting on a not obviously inconsonant distinction. On p. 11, for instance, he says:

> 'But the critical theories can be obtained from the psychology without complication with the philosophical matter. They can be given all the powers Coleridge found for them, without the use either literally, or symbolically, of the other doctrines. The psychology and the metaphysics (and theology) are independent. For Coleridge's own thought they were not; they probably could not be . . .'

Dr. Richards's rejoinder lies, of course, in that last sentence—along with his case for giving a great part of his book to the metaphysics. He shows himself, as a matter of fact—and here is the return comment of the reviewer—to be much more interested in the 'philosophical matter' than in the 'critical theories.'

If in his attitude towards the 'philosophical matter' he seems (as in other respects in this book) to be having it so elusively 'both ways,' that is because his interest in it is essentially equivocal. The philosopher is no more likely to thank him for his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

defence of philosophy than Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (see p. 8ff.) to be converted by it. His interest in Coleridge's philosophical explorations is, it may fairly be said, in the interests of Bentham's Theory of Fictions, the aim of the book being to show how out of that theory may be developed a science ' to take ' (as Mr. C. K. Ogden puts it in his introduction to Bentham's treatise) ' the place of philosophy.' Dr. Richards, of course, makes the claim formally for Coleridge and the study of Poetry: Coleridge (as interpreted by an avowed Benthamite) ' succeeded in bringing his suggestions to a point from which, with a little care and pertinacity, they can be taken on to become a new science.' (p. 43).

More than a little pertinacity is demanded by Dr. Richards's more abstruse and ambitious chapters (notably VII and VIII)—chapters that justify or otherwise the ambition of the book. An adequate criticism of them would have to come from a critic with a philosophical equipment that I can lay no claim to. (One wonders in what state the matter of them, in the original discussions and lectures, must have left literary students,[1] many of whom would never even have heard of, say, the term ' nominalism ' before being, no doubt, introduced to it by Dr. Richards). But even readers without technical qualifications will more than suspect that the ambition is extravagantly disproportionate to the justifying argument: it is one thing to observe that ' to inquire about words is to inquire about everything ' and that ' knowledge in all its varieties—scientific, moral, religious—has come to seem a vast mythology with its sub-orders divided according to their different pragmatic sanctions ' (p. 227), and much more another thing than Dr. Richards seems to recognize to give such observations the rigour and precision of development and statement that are necessary if any problem is to be left where it wasn't before. If one gets the impression that Dr. Richards, in these brief chapters, is offering to settle all problems—at any rate, to show us the way to settle them, one is left also with the impression of having been reminded of a number of commonplace philosophic considerations from which strict thinking might start.

Certainly the pretensions are inordinate, and it needs no

[1] Of whose reading capacity Dr. Richards can, one imagines, have had no high opinion.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

philosopher (or psychologist or semasiologist) to detect unacceptable compressions and ellipses in key places—failures to make, or to make clearly and hold to, essential distinctions (a debility sorting oddly with the show of analytic rigour, and, it seems, escaping the author's notice by reason of this semasiological zeal itself). For instance, we are given four Natures, IV being the scientist's, and we are told (p. 161):

> 'Nature, then, even in Senses III and IV, even when all the reflections from our perceiving activity that can be eliminated have been eliminated, remains radically a production of our perceptions.'

On p. 170 we read:

> 'We live, to-day, half in and half out of two projected Natures. One is a Nature in Sense III, confused, through lack of reflection, with the unprojected ingressive Nature of Sense I. The other is a Nature in Sense II—shot through and through with our feelings and thus a mythology for them. These two Natures are at war. The enormous development in our conception of Nature in Senses III and IV, by seeming to threaten the sanctions of these projected feelings, is making them sickly, exaggerated and hysterical.'[1]

'Nature' and 'conception (or view) of Nature,' Dr. Richards thus reminds us, are interchangeable; where he says 'Nature,' we may, if we like, as here—'The two conceptions or views of Nature are at war'—expand it into the longer expression.

Then we remind ourselves that we have just read, on the preceding page (169) that 'the perceptions sought by the man of science'

> 'result in a Nature over which our power of control is increasing with embarrassing leaps and bounds. And through this Nature

[1]Dr. Richards by the way—confirming the reviewer—contradicts this last sentence on p. 174: 'But it will not have been our theoretical knowledge of Nature in Sense III that has discredited these myths. It will have been the results of the power given us by that knowledge, our changed situation and the changes in our feelings that ensue.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(the world of natural science) it will soon be *possible* for us to remove most of the physical ills that oppress humanity.'

—Is it over a conception (or view) of Nature that our power is increasing so embarrassingly? Surely it is by means of, with the aid of, our conception that our power is increasing? If so, over what? Over, Dr. Richards answers (I suppose) Nature in Sense I—'The influences, of whatever kind, to which the mind is subject from whatever is without and independent of itself' (p. 157), a Nature that is 'outside our knowledge,' but 'in response to' which we 'take,' 'through the perceptive and imaginative activities of the mind,' certain 'images,' 'figments,' 'things,' 'existences' or 'realities' 'to be the world we live in' (p. 157). And by the time we come to the passage about 'control' we have been thoroughly warned against naïve assumptions:

'But *figment* and *real* and *substantial* are themselves words with no meaning that is not derived from our experience. To say of anything that it is a figment seems to presuppose things more real than itself; but there is nothing within our knowledge more real than these images.' (p. 165).

Here, clearly, we are in regions where only the technically qualified should venture comment, and I refrain without difficulty from suggesting the points in Dr. Richards's epistemology at which such a critic would press his questions and his analysis. I return to the laxity of expression I seem to myself to have detected in that passage about our embarrassing power of control (not itself a figment, I assume):—a mere minor laxity of expression? I do not think so. If in itself minor, then it is (to adopt a phrase of Dr. Richards's) 'a model for enormous evils.' It is in any case a laxity without which the subtlety of the following, a subtlety that belongs to the essential purpose of Dr. Richards's book, would have been impossible:

'But dissent is not merely probable but certain if this account is applied to all myths or—to put it the other way—if *all* views of Nature are taken to be projections of the mind, and the religions as well as sciences are included among myths.' (p. 177).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is indeed disarming, the religious reader must feel—very different from the crude attitude of *Science and Poetry* (in reviewing which Mr. Douglas Garman,[1] not criticizing from a religious point of view, rudely spoke of the author's ' lick-spittle attitude ' to science) ; if dissent is probable, the dissenter has the emollient assurance that at any rate science and religion are placed on a level and treated with equal respect. The equality, of course, is in courtesy merely. Science is a ' special kind of myth '—' Other myths do not derive from knowledge in the sense in which science is knowledge ' (p. 174)—and the ' fundamentally important difference between the myths of natural science and the myths of poetry in the unrestricted claim upon our overt action of the former (getting out of the way of motor-cars, for example)' (p. 178) is so fundamentally important that, as we see, all other kinds of myth, contrasted with science, fall together under ' poetry.'

I write, not as an indignant religionist who has seen through Dr. Richards's blarney, but as a person of literary interests who is nevertheless concerned for rigorous thinking. I have my eye on that term ' myth,' which is so generously inclusive, and which does so much of Dr. Richards's work for him. Science and ' poetry ' are two fundamentally different kinds of thing ; science and ' poetry ' are the same kind of thing (for some purposes)—anyway, they are both myths, or mythologies. Obviously, the possibilities here of confusion and unconscious sleight are considerable if (as Dr. Richards, for his own purposes, does) one insists on using ' myth ' as a key term. Naturally, keeping a sharp watch upon the purpose (Tone and Intention, as one registers them locally, are not such as to reassure the suspicious) one looks to the argument for a vigilance and a scrupulousness corresponding to the dangers and temptations. One decidedly does not find what one has a right to expect: it is, indeed, difficult not to conclude, unkindly, that one advantage of a training in the Multiple Definition technique is a certain freedom from inhibition in ' getting it both ways.'

In any case, the conviction remains that the problems Dr. Richards offers to deal with lie among the distinctions and differences covered by that embracing concept ' myth ' (and its

[1] See *Towards Standards of Criticism*, p. 170.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

associates), and that he shows nothing approaching an adequate concern for those distinctions and differences. The one difference that is firmly grasped has, as he proffers it, the effect of making science the one kind of myth to be taken seriously (' one gets out of the way of motor-cars '). This may seem unfair, and I am sure that Dr. Richards will think so, for, as we shall see, he takes an unusually exalted view of poetry. But ' poetry '—here is another of his embracing terms: it is his lack of interest in the differences he covers with it that produces the effect just noted. I cannot believe that, if you were taking adequate account of the other things besides what I should call ' poetry ' that Dr. Richards includes under that head, you could be content to leave them there with as little attention to the differences as Dr. Richards shows (any more than I can believe that, if you take no more account of the differences, you are, whatever your theories, really a friend to poetry).

Such attention as he does pay to the differences seems merely to emphasize his lack of interest. For instance, on pp. 174-5 we read:

> ' For the claim to be knowledge, in this sense, is simply the claim to unrestricted, unconditional control over Action . . . We step out of the way of the oncoming motor-bus. But our response to any myth is restricted and conditional. What has gone into it determines what we may properly and wisely take from it. " We receive but what we give." If we try to take more from the myth than has gone into it we violate the order of our lives.'

—If we recognize no more in the way of difficulty here than Dr. Richards shows any sign of recognizing, then ' order ' (I will risk saying, without indicating where in ' the paradigm of the fluctuations of the word *word* ' (p. 103) this use comes) remains, it seems to me, a mere word. Just what has gone into the various necessary myths, how it went, how it determines what we may ' properly and rightly ' take, and how we may keep sufficiently supplied with ' myths ' into which the appropriate something has somehow ' gone '—these are obviously the important problems, and Dr. Richards hardly gives a sign of having noticed them (I will risk,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again, adding that he seems to me curiously prone to an uncritical satisfaction with words). He does indeed, extending—in spite of the lapse by which, in the passage just quoted, science, or the motor-bus, becomes contra-distinguished from myth—the term ' Action ' to the non-scientific ' mythologies,' recognize in a general way that there are various modes of ' Accordant Action ' (Belief): ' It includes intellectual assent, feeling, submission in desire, attitude and will—all modes of response to the myth from mere contemplation to overt behaviour ' (p. 173). But here, in what it includes, and remains including—' intellectual assent, feeling, submission in desire, attitude and will '—are the problems ; problems to which successions of distinguished spirits have devoted themselves and concerning which there are important traditions (' wisdom,' as Dr. Richards uses it, seems to me another mere word).

When he says (p. 176), ' I have been taking the largest and the smallest myths together,' one can only exclaim: ' You have indeed!' He continues, a sentence or two further on, characteristically: ' Probably the application of my remarks to the larger myths will have most occupied the reader. But an account of the origin and function of myths is more conveniently tested on lesser examples.' ' Conveniently ' certainly seems the right word here. But the instances of ' testing ' that he adduces—his dealings (to be referred to later) with Landor and the *Immortality Ode*—make the coolness (for I don't know how else to describe it) of the procedure something for gaping admiration. And actually, whatever might be established or not about the ' larger myths ' by analysing bits of poems, nowhere in his book, it must be said, does Dr. Richards seriously attempt even such analysis.

To say this, of course, is, by the terms of his own challenge, to dismiss the pretension of the book. But even if, groping one's way through the largenesses of the philosophic argument, one had slipped by the small testings and failed to keep the challenge in mind, and, in philosophic modesty, had concluded that there was a swarm of doubts of which Dr. Richards ought to have the benefit, one would, even in one's worst state of dazed fatigue, have been quite sure by the last chapter that something had gone badly wrong—sure, because of where Dr. Richards exhibits himself as left by the argument:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ' To put the burden of constituting an order for our minds on the poet may seem unfair. It is not the philosopher, however, or the moralist who puts it on him, but birth.' (p. 227).

The intended force of this claim for ' the poet,' so stated apart from the context, would be uncertain, and, indeed, remains so ; but that we are to take the claim at the extreme of romantic inflation the context leaves us no room for doubt. Dr. Richards has asserted, basing himself mainly on a suggested comparison between Defoe's description of Crusoe's sea-shore and Mr. Joyce's of Stephen Dedalus's, that there has been a ' dissolution of consciousness ' such that ' the whole machinery through which self-examination with a view to increased order could be conducted by Defoe has lapsed ' (pp. 222-3). It is, as a rule, impossible to pin Dr. Richards down locally to any precise meaning ; here, for instance, ' machinery ' appears to be grammatically in apposition with ' the nomenclature of the faculties, of the virtues and the vices, of the passions, of the moods . . . ' and while, on the one hand, ' nomenclature ' when used by Dr. Richards is a term to watch very warily, ' increased order,' on the other hand, is moderate in suggestion. But a reading of the sequence of pages makes it plain that we are to take ' dissolution ' as meaning (for some purposes, at any rate) the effective disappearance of the very principles of order—of the main lines of organization once represented by the old nomenclature and the current ' vocabulary '—and the absence of anything in the nature of appropriate ' mythology.' ' Without his mythologies man is only a cruel animal without a soul ' (p. 171) ; and it is in any case plain that birth will have to have bestowed on the poet something very considerable indeed besides a burden.

> ' The dissolution of consciousness exhibited in such prose ' (as that of *Jacob's Room* or *Ulysses*—odd collocation) ' . . . forces the task of reconstituting a less relaxed, a less adventitious order for the mind upon contemporary poetry ' (p. 235).

I still don't understand just how prose is related to poetry in this argument, and the expectation entertained of ' the poet ' seems to me preposterously extravagant, but it is nevertheless pleasant to be able to agree that contemporary poetry is, or ought

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be, important. Further agreement would seem to follow: agreement, let us say, in the aims represented by *Scrutiny*. It follows, for instance, that it is important to get poetry read—to work towards providing for it, what does not exist at present, an informed, intelligent and influential public. And having made this very obvious point, we find ourselves contemplating the problems presented by the state of current criticism—we find ourselves committed to desiderating (shall we say?) and supporting, when they appear, some serious critical journals; we find ourselves, moreover, committed to hoping (at any rate) that something may come of a determined, concerted and sustained effort in the educational field. And if we take these commitments seriously we shall before long find ourselves contemplating economic and political problems. In any case we shall not be light-hearted.

And here, in this last sentence, I have come to a reason for not being confident that any such measure of agreement as should, I have suggested, follow a common recognition of the importance of poetry does really exist between Dr. Richards and myself. He is decidedly light-hearted. He writes, for instance, on p. 229:

> 'Eras that produced no poetry that is remembered have been as disordered as ours. There are better reasons, in the work of modern poets, to hope that a creative movement is beginning and that poetry, freed from a mistaken conception of its limitations and read more discerningly than heretofore, will remake our minds and with them our world.'

Clearly there would be no point in asking for—what would nevertheless be very interesting—a little specificity here; there may be three times as many modern poets, and poets three times as promising, as any I know of, but that would not make Dr. Richards's optimism regarding their influence critically respectable. In fact, Poetry in general for Dr. Richards—and for him it is always in general—is, it becomes impossible in these places to doubt, a myth that has very little to do with any particular actualities of poetry, or with the actualities of the world in which poets have to produce their work. It is a large private myth into which, seeing what he gets from it, one concludes a great deal must have gone: with the aid of it he evades the motor-buses and other difficulties and dangers in his theoretical path, slipping into the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

empyrean by something very like the Indian rope-trick.

His view of poetry indeed is unrealistic to a degree almost incredible. Having, for instance, laid the burden upon ' the poet,' he says (p. 227):

> ' There is a figure of speech here, of course, for the burden is not on individual poets, but on the poetic function. With Homer, Dante and Shakespeare in mind, however, the importance of the single poet is not to be under-estimated.'

Dr. Richards would seem to favour an idealist-individualism that amounts to a naïve Marxism inverted. In any case, to suggest that we may reasonably look for anything approaching a modern Homer, Dante or Shakespeare is to endorse the crudest romantic notion of inspired genius: does Dr. Richards know nothing about the general cultural conditions represented by the achievements of those poets (if we are to call Homer *a* poet in the same sense as Dante or Shakespeare)—conditions, in each case, essential to the achievement, and beyond the capacity of the greatest individual genius to provide? If the nature and significance of such conditions had been present to him he could hardly have been so light-hearted about the ' dissolution of consciousness ' that he envisages—he could hardly, even if there had been a wide public for poetry in our time and no Book Societies, Hollywoods and Northcliffes, have talked of the necessary new myths as something that a few individual poets, or a Poetic Renaissance, could improvise. It is, as a matter of fact, the very absence of such conditions in our time that he is asking the poet—or the poetic function—to remedy.

These problems raised by the mention of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare get no hint of recognition. Instead we find (p. 229):

> ' Such an estimate of the power of poetry may seem extravagant ; but it was Milton's no less than Shelley's, Blake's or Wordsworth's. It has been the opinion of many with whom we need not be ashamed to agree . . . ' [Quotation from Ben Jonson follows].

We haven't yet decided whether this is a careless insult to our intelligence, or merely an incredibly innocent peroration, when we discover that it is modesty. These exalted and reverberant general-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ities, it turns out, express merely a certain embarrassment at the approach of the real claim—at the shift from oblique statement to the direct. The real claim is not for the poet, but for the semasiologist:

> ' With Coleridge we step across the threshold of a general theoretical study of language capable of opening to us new powers over our minds comparable to those which systematic critical inquiries are giving us over our environment. The step across was of the same type as that which took Galileo into the modern world. It requires the shift from a preoccupation with the What and Why to the How of language ' (p. 232).

The step, it appears, has already been taken ; something has been established in this book:

> ' And it has this consequence, that critics in the future must have a theoretical equipment of a kind which has not been felt to be necessary in the past. (So physicists may sigh for the days in which less mathematics was required by them). But the critical equipment will not be *primarily* philosophical. It will be rather a command of the methods of general linguistic analysis. As the theory of Poetry develops, what is needed will be disengaged from philosophy, much as the methodology of physics has been disengaged ' (p. 233).

Dr. Richards's book, we are to understand, has both demonstrated the possibility and nature of the new science and provided a start towards the necessary ' mathematics.'

What is there in the book to justify these pretensions? Bluntly, nothing. There are recurrent hints at the revolutionary new technique and its epoch-making potentialities, but, for demonstration, not even a beginning in the serious critical analysis of poetry.

The most determined show of demonstrating the technique and inaugurating the science is Chapter IV, ' Imagination and Fancy,' in which Dr. Richards tries to turn Coleridge's distinction into a precise (or, to be fair, useful) laboratory instrument. Taking Coleridge's own example from *Venus and Adonis*, he notices that in the Fancy passage—

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
A lily prison'd in a gaol of snow, etc.,

—there is no ' relevant interaction, no interinanimation,' between the ' units of meaning.' Shakespeare, he says justly, is not attempting to realize in words the contact of hands, either as felt by the actors or seen by us. ' He is making pleasing collocations that are *almost* wholly unconnected with what he is writing about.' The commentary continues, characteristically:

> ' Why he is doing this (and what it is) are large questions. The answer would be partly historical . . . It would be partly psychological . . . '

But why not, one asks, make the obvious and essential point that Shakespeare with his ' lily,' ' snow,' ' ivory ' and ' alabaster ' is being conventional—conventional in a mode readily illustrated from any anthology of Elizabethan verse (or from the *Oxford Book*)?

Those ' large questions ' are merely a nuisance: they distract Dr. Richards from noticing that the decorative-conventional element, pervasive in the poem, conditions such passages as that which he takes, in isolation, as imaginative. At any rate, if he notices, he says nothing about it, but gives a very misleading account of:

Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.

He does not point out how, when we come to these lines in their place in the poem, ' realization ' is limited and conditioned, the situation ' distanced,' so that we suffer no such profound imaginative stir as his analysis suggests (p. 83).

He will no doubt reply that he is deliberately restricting his commentary, for the moment, to the enforcement of a given point. To this one has to rejoin that he nowhere in the book goes any further or deeper, or suggests the limitations and dangers of this superficial inspection of odds and ends, or incites to the discipline required for the serious analysis of poetry. He encourages instead the wholly misdirected kind of ingenuity represented by the footnote on p. 80. The triviality of the demonstration—and, I repeat, we get nothing more serious—offers an odd contrast with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the portentous prelude, ' The Coalescence of Subject and Object,' which we are invited to wrestle with as essential to the understanding of Fancy and Imagination (the book in general is characterized by such a contrast—the contrast, sometimes amusing, between the difficulty of the philosophic argument and the critical greenness presumed in the reader).

This triviality is inherent in the ambition of the undertaking. The explanation lies in the following sentence (p. 84):

> ' This, then, is an *observable* difference from which we set out, though it is unhappily not true that all can observe it equally or equally clearly.'

That ' *observable* ' explains why, after the setting out, there is no advance. Why is it italicized? Clearly, in order to suggest—the claim is implicit—that here we have the beginnings of a laboratory technique. This is the point at which, in unavoidable nakedness, the nature of the process of ' re-interpreting ' Coleridge in Benthamite terms (or of uniting the realms of Coleridge and Bentham [see p. 18]) lies exposed, clear for a moment of metaphysics and semasiology. What do we propose to bring for treatment into the laboratory? Poetry, or bits of poetry. But the data can be possessed only by a delicate inner discipline, and in such possession as is incompatible with producing them in any laboratory, or in any way that the analogy of ' laboratory ' does not completely misrepresent. Dr. Richards himself (who does not use the word ' laboratory,' but merely italicizes ' observable ') has said as much again and again, sometimes in quite admirable formulations ; for example (*Practical Criticism*, p. 291):

> ' It might be said, indeed, with some justice, that the value of poetry lies in the difficult exercise in sincerity it can impose upon its readers even more than upon the poet.'

But the new science has somehow to be got started. So we find Dr. Richards trying to explain how ' something rather like a refreshed atomism—a counting of relations—appears again as we develop and apply Coleridge's doctrine ' (p. 70). This counting must not be crudely confused with valuation—the valuation that involves exercises in sincerity, and so confronts laboratory technique with extremely delicate problems. These problems may be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

postponed, and dealt with later. Coleridge, of course, used the terms, Imagination and Fancy, as implying different values. ' The conception [Imagination] was devised as a means of describing the wider and deeper powers of some poetry ' (p. 96). Nevertheless, we can, if we wish

> ' make the terms purely descriptive. We shall then have instances of Imagination which are valuable and instances which are not, and we must then go on to contrive a further theory, a theory of values which will explain (so far as we are able to do so at present) these differences of value. [This is the procedure I attempted to follow in *Principles of Literary Criticism*]' (p. 96).

There is, perhaps, something admirable in the candour of that square-bracketed parenthesis: Dr. Richards will hardly contend at this date that the theory of values expounded in *Principles of Literary Criticism* is of any use for any respectable purpose whatever, or that it does anything but discredit the ambition to make criticism a science. In any case, the confusion obscuring the scientific project remains, and it is not lessened by Dr. Richards's appearing to put the case against himself in the latter part of the chapter (pp. 97-99). (He has an odd way of suggesting that by being on both sides at once—or by slipping unobtrusively from one to the other—one reconciles them).

Coleridge's critical doctrine, of course, cannot be ' developed and applied ' into a science ; to attempt such development and application is to abandon him for (shall we say?) Bentham. Dr. Richards, in his account of the bent of interest and the training that produced the doctrine, curiously slights one important head. Metaphysics and psychology get full insistence:

> ' It is to be expected then that what he found to say after his inquiries will not be understood by those without a similar training. This is true of all special studies. Psychology, however, is peculiar in that those who are not students in it feel ready so often to correct those who were.' (p. 37).

Against this it seems to me important to set—we have Coleridge's own words[1]—another aspect of his training:

---

[1] *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, Raysor, Vol I, p. 220.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'O! when I think of the inexhaustible mine of virgin treasure in our Shakespeare, that I have been almost daily reading him since I was ten years old—that the thirty intervening years have been unintermittingly and not fruitlessly employed in the study of the Greek, Latin, English, Italian, Spanish and German *belle-lettrists* . . . '

With these intense literary interests and this training, Coleridge (he was indeed a 'subtle-souled psychologist') was equipped to think rigorously about poetry and to understand the nature and conditions of the process of analysing it. Even if the theoretical knowledge 'available' in his time had equalled the modern psychologist's, he could hardly have asked (at any rate, with Dr. Richards's intention): 'Do we yet know enough about what we are doing when we try to analyse a passage of poetry to settle its merits or demerits *by argument*?'[1] (p. 127). I say 'with Dr. Richards's intention' because the question is not unambiguous. But (though—or is it 'though'?—Dr. Richards says that, with our present knowledge, 'the answer must be a firm "No"') the dealings with the *Immortality Ode* that follow compel us to interpret 'settle by argument' in the way the pervasive laboratory pretension suggests.

Dr. Richards undertakes to dispose of Coleridge's strictures on the 'Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!' passage. Some of the replies admit of very damaging rejoinders, but few readers interested in poetry will bother to argue with Dr. Richards: it is so plain that the piece of arguing he offers (though—see p. 176—it is a large proportion of the illustrative practice on which he bases his science) neither illustrates, nor furthers, the analysis of poetry. It will perhaps be enough (space being limited) to quote his conclusion:

'My comments on Coleridge's misunderstandings do not aver that the Ode is a piece of scientific psychology. Nor would I say that—apart from some twenty lines, five or six of which are 'truths that wake, to perish never'—it is at Wordsworth's

[1] 'The "yet" is there to suggest that our present theoretical knowledge is only a beginning' (p. 127).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

highest level. But its weakest lines deserve respect as the frame of what they support ' (p. 137).

No critic who had gone through the Ode in (to use Dr. Richards's own admirable phrase) ' experimental submission ' could have committed himself to this summing-up, or have supposed that the argument leading to it was doing anything but distract from the relevant analysis. (Of course, an account of the Ode is assumed here that I am, naturally, ready to supply).

Coleridge's interest in developing his theories was of a kind that did not tempt him to forget the nature of ' experimental submission ' (without which, whatever it is that is analysed, it is not poetry). And the central passage on the Imagination, we do well to remind ourselves, begins with the sentence about the poet's bringing ' the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity.' It is one thing for Coleridge to point, by means of examples, to the kind of way in which Imagination manifests itself locally. It is very much another thing to suppose that one is developing his theory into precision when, by much argument about isolated odds and ends of verse, one arrives at this (p. 91):

> ' But Imagination, as I have described it, can be shown in trivial examples. And Fancy can be shown in important matters . . . In Imagination, as I have taken it, the joint effect (worthless or not) . . . '

Coleridge's theory can be developed only in an arduous and scrupulous exploration of the organic complexities of poetry by a developing analysis—by an analysis going deeper and deeper and taking wider and wider relations into account ; that is, becoming less and less disguisable as laboratory technique. Dr. Richards's procedure, heading away from the concrete, leaves him (it is an ironical fate for one who warns us so much against this sort of thing) the happy servant of a set of abstract terms. It is comment enough on the new science that it should enable him, in the effort to explain how ' the sense of musical delight,' which is a ' gift of the imagination,' can be given by *The Faerie Queene*, which is ' chiefly a work of Fancy,' to discover in that poem

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> ' an architectural, which is here an imaginative unity. And it may be this other unity which produces " the sense of musical delight." It is thus that Spenser " has an imaginative fancy." ' (p. 120).

The ingenious undergraduate will certainly find that the new apparatus has its uses.

It is plain that, when Dr. Richards remarks (p. 137) that 'persons with literary interests to-day frequently suffer from lack of exercise in careful and sometimes arduous thinking,' he lays himself open to the retort that, if one is going to think with effect about literature, there must be no lack of intensity in one's literary interests. They must be intense enough to ensure disinterestedness. It is here that Dr. Richards, in certain very obvious ways, fails. That his literary interests derive from an interest in theory rather than his theory from his literary interests has never been a secret. The fact is apparent (Dr. Richards insists upon one's coming out with this delicate kind of judgment) in his prose. Mr. Eliot made a radical criticism when he corrected that ' enormity ' in the Ritual for Sincerity. The insensitiveness is pervasive. (Even in descending to slang one should respect the peculiar force of the given expression, and I take the occasion here to protest against the jocular reference to Coleridge as the ' Highgate spell-binder ' (p. 22): ' spell-binding ' surely implies a combination of contempt for one's audience with desire to impress it, and Coleridge, I imagine, was at no period guilty of that sort of thing.)

But the disability that beyond any question matters is that apparent both in the infrequency, in Dr. Richards's theorizing, of any approach to the concrete and in the quality of such approach as he ventures on. *Practical Criticism*, for instance, is valuable in spite of the title's being a misnomer; and the theoretical considerations—the hints thrown out, the questions asked—would have been more valuable if they had derived from a more adequate interest in particulars. That book, too, offers depressing instances of the relation between insufficiency of interest and lack of disinterestedness, the most remarkable of them being Dr. Richards's ' case ' about the Longfellow poem. No one concerned merely to see what was there in front of him could have found that poem ' extremely urbane ' and ' rather witty ' (references to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

' Dryden, Pope and Cowper ') ; or have supposed that the case made out, with ' suppleness (not subtlety)', was even faintly plausible.

The offence (there are others of the kind in *Practical Criticism*) is a very serious one in a champion of the serious study of poetry. It is shocking to find Dr. Richards, in the present book, impenitent about another offence of the same kind. He refers back to his *Fifteen Lines of Landor* as a serious experiment. But I have not been able to discover that he has replied anywhere to the letter from Mr. Bonamy Dobree printed in *The Criterion* for October, 1933. Mr. Dobree there points out that ' Dr. Richards deliberately made a puzzle for his students by omitting to inform them what Landor was talking about ' (the information being necessary because of the wresting of the passage from its context). ' It is one thing,' comments Mr. Dobree, ' to conduct scientific experiments on the reactions of people to certain collections of words, another to discover, by a little calm thought, what a poet was talking about.' Mr. Dobree moreover, in his closing sentence, puts his finger on the irrelevant ' idea,' the imported interest, that led Dr. Richards to set his students at exercises so much the reverse of conducive, in nature and spirit, to the sensitive reading of poetry.

The last chapter of the present book is called ' The Bridle of Pegasus ' and it is especially full of irresponsible generalities, bright ideas and uncritical tips. Who, for instance, are these ' new-fanglers ' who are unable to construe the ' meaning structures ' of ' Shelley, Keats or Wordsworth ' (and what have the ' meaning structures ' of these three poets in common?)? Is it, again, a critical, or scientific, proceeding to base any conclusion about the development of consciousness on a comparison between Daniel Defoe and James Joyce? Ought Dr. Richards to throw out such large generalizations about the history of reading capacity so lightly, and so lightly to ' decline the invidious task of demonstration '? Is it helpful to point out that the ' agèd eagle ' passage in *Ash Wednesday* is ' dramatic,' without noting too that it falls (its significance being that it does so) within a poem an essential characteristic of which is to be much less ' dramatic ' than most of Mr. Eliot's work? Has Dr. Richards not read the *Mad Prince's Song* since he wrote *Science and Poetry* that he should still think

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that poem (in which Mr. de la Mare makes a characteristic use of Ophelia) a 'quintessence' of *Hamlet*? Does he still (see the footnote on p. 207) think that Mr. Yeats in *The Wind Among the Reeds* was writing 'an unusually simple and direct kind of love poetry' (*Science and Poetry*, p. 73)?

But I must leave the rest of my notes unused. It is depressing to realize, in any case, that this commentary has been so completely adverse. But Dr. Richards does seem to me to be heading completely away from any useful path—and to be heading others: his past work has won him prestige enough to make this explicitness unavoidable. It is a great pity, when one thinks of what, had he limited himself by any given discipline, he might have accomplished. As it is, one can only turn against him the terms of his own challenge:

> 'But the study of poetry, for those born in this age, is more arduous than we suppose. It is therefore rare. Many other things pass by its name and are encouraged to its detriment' (p. 230).

F. R. LEAVIS.

POETRY 1934

LANDSCAPE WEST OF EDEN, by Conrad Aiken (Dent, 2/6).

AMERICAN SONG, by Paul Engle (Jonathan Cape, 5/-).

TRISTRAM, by Frank Kendon (Dent, 2/6).

BRANWEN, by Ll. Wyn Griffith (Dent, 2/6).

NO APOLOGY FOR POETRIE, by Sherry Mangan (Bruce Humphries, Inc., Boston, Mass., $2.50).

OPEN THE SKY, by John Pudney (Boriswood, 5/-).

POEMS, by Stephen Spender, second edition revised and enlarged (Faber and Faber, 5/-).

VIENNA, by Stephen Spender (Faber and Faber, 3/6)

18 POEMS, by Dylan Thomas (The Sunday Referee and The Parton Bookshop, 3/6).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE YEAR'S POETRY, compiled by Gerald Gould, John Lehmann, Denys Kilham Roberts, 6/-.

TEN INTRODUCTIONS, edited by Genevieve Taggard and Dudley Fitts (Arrow Editions, New York, $2.50).

It is certain that poetry would soon be flourishing in England if the only difficulty which faced the poets were that of finding a publisher. The facility with which the youngest poets reach the public is a sign of the general longing for a poetic revival. But though the number of books being published is high their quality is mediocre. None of the books in this list is as outstanding as, say, Auden's *Poems* were, and taken together they do not encourage any very extravagant hopes for the immediate future. Indeed, they point much more clearly to the difficulty of writing any successful, independent poetry in these years. Taken in this sense they provide material for a sober estimate of the general run of writing which, not itself first-class, depends on the first-class poetry of the time. *The Year's Poetry* contains poems by 48 writers arranged according to age. 'It is designed to illustrate the development of English Poetry ; and will, it is hoped, be the first of an annual series.' It opens with Yeats ('We were the last romantics'), passes on to the surviving Georgians, a number of post-war poets ranging from Humbert Wolfe to Roy Campbell, and gives the remaining half of the book to what may be called the *New Signatures* group and ends with more recent names. How such a book illustrates the *development* of English poetry I cannot see. Most of the poems in the first half exhibit a falling off from an earlier manner and a great many poems are included which have nothing to do with English poetry at all. The new movement beginning with Auden does not yet require further comment than that provided in previous reviews. It is with the latest crop of writers that we are primarily concerned.

The advantage of these writers in having assimilated good modern influences stands out best by comparison with work of equal sensibilities who are writing outside the main current. I am not sure that *Branwen* does not reveal finer perceptions than can be found in the other books. Similarly comparison of this book with *Tristram* brings out the level of seriousness at which the legend is used. *Tristram* is a crude, sentimental narrative of no impor-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tance. The choice of *Branwen* for theme is compelled at least by national considerations (the castle at Harlech still stands and the troubles of Wales are the main concern of the poem) and it is made to express the private torments of the poet. Yet though the emotions are decent and keenly felt, the poet appears to be unable to survive his experiences. The poem is sparse and never catches fire, the weight of sorrow damps everything. It is a melancholy picture; here, it seems, is a potential poet quenched, for the pleasure *Branwen* provides is that of its painful austerity, the very austerity which has robbed the writer's imagination of its power to create a living poem. Hardy and Yeats have made poetry out of comparable pain ; the failure of *Branwen* is in finding an ' objective equivalent.' But if he has not made ' blood and bone ' of *Branwen* the portrayal of his own resolution makes salutary reading.

> Scatter these dreams of febrile years
> With grey granite look of your hard eyes beckoning.
> I have known war and death, Branwen: I am not afraid.
> Walk down the hill that I may touch your hand,
> I am not afraid.

Open the Sky is an improvement on *Spring Encounter*. Not a great improvement to be sure, but it is something to see the gradual assimilation of a modern technique even if there is little sign of an individual emerging to unite the various influences. In the present volume the author has attempted a play in the style of Auden and Eliot. What emerges from the combination is not very convincing. The birth of Christ is used to symbolize the birth ot the revolutionary movement in a capitalist society. But so little of the poem belongs to the author that for one reader at least the story of the birth remains detached from the communist surroundings. He would have to be a very powerful poet to be able to capitalize the sources on which the Christian legend can draw for a music hall setting of civilization (the Ace, the Broker, etc.) and the economic creed. Stephen Spender has fared even worse with his description of the shootings in Vienna. The second edition of his *Poems* (a significant witness to the quality of the reading public) from which the more immature poems were omitted had appeared two months before and gave hardly a hint of what was to come.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In *Vienna* Spender appears very clumsily dressed in the robes of Eliot (chiefly *Ash Wednesday*) the ' pylon ' imagery and possible other borrowed garments. The surprising thing is that the borrowing is so stupidly done and that the author's own contribution is a pitifully crude party exasperation against those responsible for the outrages on the working class in Vienna. Even if such exasperation could be made dramatic material the shoddiness of the writing prevents the poem from being anything but very bad. Nor is it a splendid failure ; if anything it suggests that the author would do well to open up the lines begun in the first book ; at any rate it now seems clear that there was some justification for finding uncertainty and instability in the *Poems*. *Vienna* does not call for extended comment ; it will now be clear that the former book was not the ' reward of the experimentalism of the last two decades ' but the product of an immature and limited talent. It may well be that the thought of a critical public would have prevented the publishing if it could not prevent the writing of *Vienna*.

The remainder of the young poets have one or two things in common. Principally an entire lack of personal rhythm, so that they all sound very much alike. (This does not apply to William Empson. His *Letter V*, the only poem of his I have seen for a year, is moulded to his way of speech. Similarly Ronald Bottrall runs the speech rhythm against the verse rhythm, which gives him a sharp control over the tone and movement of his poem. *Instructions before Dinner* is the most recent success of this order). The technical immaturity is naturally bound up with the uncertainty of direction not surprising in the first efforts of young writers. What emerges as a tentative conclusion from this superficial survey is the dominance of Eliot as an emotional and technical stimulus even on poets who would claim to be opposed to him. While the general vocabulary and manner is sufficient for most of these minor writers when they are recording personal impressions, when they wish to sound a more universal note which they are unable to compass in their own experience they draw on Eliot in such a way that whole passages stick out as unrelated paraphrase. This should not be surprising. It was remarkable enough that anyone should be able to forge a personal idiom in the present state of the world.

The American books in this list do nothing to contradict the implied extension in the last sentence. Whether they are in any

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sense representative of American poetry I am unable to say. *Landscape West of Eden* is ' readable ' ; that is, it is a facile and far from inevitable allegory dealing in vast immensities which are never realized. This metaphysical incontinence is not poetry. It is abstract in the vicious sense ; the poet reduces himself from a rounded creature in contact with flesh and blood to an

> ' absurd cocoon of consciousness hung in the void.'

As such he is able to deal with themes which it is so difficult to control in their concrete complexity. True, he is ' learning to wither,' but when Yeats ' withered into the truth ' his language became in Mr. Aiken's own words ' so concentrated, so terrible, so godlike.' In *Landscape West of Eden* we find the opposite. While deliberately inviting the parallel of *Ash Wednesday*,

> ' rejoicing
> at nothing, or rejoicing that one can so rejoice
> at nothing ;

he proceeds blithely to sail the infinite. In 1919 Mr. Murry wondered whether the author would ever discipline himself to curb this fault. But in 1934 he is still content to write like this:

> ' If all were on one plane, how easy! If sorrow
> were sorrow only for a single season, not for
> a thousand things! And if, for but a moment,
> alas, for but a moment, we might know
> the countless planes of feeling, or of knowledge, or of guess,
> of which a moment's awareness is the intersection!
> If we could see,—all in an instant,—
> the lost flower, the tired hand, the slowed heartbeat, the cry
> of water on rock, the sad history of the sand ;
> the tragedy of the half-remembered, the half-longed-for ;
> perceptions of time, of distance ; self-distrust, self-praise,
> simplicity of removal, and the wound it gives ;
> simplicity of approach, and the blessing it gives ;
> absence or presence of warmth, the come and go of light
> If . . . (etc.)

No Apology for Poetrie and *American Song* represent to English eyes two extremes. The former breathes a spirit that one feels

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by rights should come rather from an English than an American university. The author prints poems representing his progress from 1922-1931. They display an acquaintance with many cultures, Eliot and Pound, and an absence of political heartburnings. Consequently in comparison with his contemporaries in England he has more and more varied facets of himself to present. The mere fact that he is largely conscious of his limits enables him to achieve a poise and exhibit a definite attitude to the reader which is difficult to discover in most of the English writers. He is, to say the least, an admirable tonic. The little poem (' an earnest of better things,' says the author, ' and the one poem in the collection on which I take my stand ') deserves quotation if only to show the degree of independence from his major influences so far achieved. The whole volume may be compared with the poems in *The Loosening*. Such a comparison indicates what Sherry Mangan lacks and how far he has to go.

NO APOLOGY FOR POETRIE.

Sonnets are such silly flowers
to drink passion's whiskey out of.

Or need we mention love? Thenafter . . .

Observation begat didacticism: we fled
the essay, currently scanning. Socrates mere
ethics ; the rest as bad or worse. Sickened
as well the smell of incense. Li-Po (was it?),
with a skin-ful of rice-wine, sought the moon
in a garden pool. This proved no anodyne.
Rows in Vienna: Sigmund begat André—and then
the deluge. Progressively sickening, we sought
the purple swamp again, Aristotle cicerone.
Rode grandly in a cerebral intoxication
through Thomas, laying the ghost Uncertainty ;
drunk, as on rice-wine, with the conclusions,
knowing how inacceptable the premises.

And stopped, short, at three twenty-two p.m.,
like an apoplectic recovering from the shock,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

asking the usual senseless ' Where are we?'
O tightrope-walkers of the antique logic, wishfully
juggling with truth, once let the new blade, far
sharper than Occam's knife, cut through the trusted
cord, then we're exactly nowhere.

In this house at the age of eight he learned
the behaviour of quicksilver and methods of mastur-
bation.
Short errands, five cents ; long ones, ten. Growing up,
he found it much the same : money and women
and the problem of certainty.

As we turned
this little croquis in our hands, our eye
saw in the air between—$G\mu\nu = 0$;
and we fled, terrified. Beyond this nothing?
This is the shortest line through life to death?

(. . . against the pedal-point of death, the cant
' o sestet admirable, o felicitous
antitheses, ô phrase bien tournée . . . ')

May I not die before I wake.

No Apology for Poetrie is the old, maligned ' esoteric ' stuff. *American Song* is popular poetry whether it takes with the public or not. The writer has drawn on the English Romantics, notably Shelley

(Rise, O skylark, from the fields
Of earth unto the song-crested sky
Of immortality).

and seasoned them with superficial reminiscences of current modern writers and frontier virility

(There is a primitive old strength of heart
Men have called courage and that we call guts
It bore the Crucifix and warped the waggons
Of Boone's men westward through the frozen ruts ;)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which is still supposed to characterize ex-pioneer America. His style is easy and warmly uplifting and yet, ironically enough, smacking far more of England than of America. His vision of the present task of America is conveniently vague.

> Where shall they go
> Now, the for ever westward-wandering people?
> They cannot be quiet, they cannot rest, they would not
> Be American if they could do that. I tell them: You
> Shall fit again the curved felloe, and with the bucket
> Swinging under the waggon, the slouch-gaited hound
> Following its restless shade patch, plunge
> Into that vaster and more savage West,
> The unfamiliar country of your heart.

The ten hitherto unpublished writers of *Ten Introductions* do not attempt this strain. James Neugass dissects various crumbling relics of a decaying society in verse which is promisingly alive and inflected—if the life is borrowed from such poems as *A Portrait of a Lady*. Robert Fitzgerald meditates in the cadences of Eliot. A single poem is composed almost entirely as a cento from *Gerontion, The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday*. Theodore Spencer, too, is never very far from Eliot. The American batch contains no more promise than the English.

H. A. MASON.

MR. POUND'S PROPERTIUS

HOMAGE TO SEXTUS PROPERTIUS, by Ezra Pound (Faber and Faber, 2/6).

It is tempting, and also instructive, to compare Mr. Pound's *Propertius* with the original Propertius, but it must be emphasized that it is to *Mauberley* rather than to the Latin verse of Propertius that Mr. Pound's *Propertius* is related. Interesting affinities may, perhaps, be detected between the Latin poet and the English poet.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A good deal of Propertius (there seems reason to believe) was as much ' translation ' from the Greek of Callimachus as Mr. Pound's *Propertius* is from Propertius. Only a small proportion of Callimachus has been preserved ; but the three poets appear to have this quality at least in common that they are, in a sense I shall return to, ' late '—the Latin poet ' late ' in his civilization, our contemporary in his. Nevertheless it remains the case that the reader who seems to ' appreciate ' the Latin will not necessarily appreciate Mr. Pound ; whereas the reader who already appreciates *Mauberley* will at once appreciate also the *Propertius*. The latter reader is, probably, the ' instructed ' reader whom Mr. Eliot implies in his Introduction to his selection from which he omits the *Propertius*—

' If the uninstructed reader is not a classical scholar, he will make nothing of it ; if he be a classical scholar, he will wonder why this does not conform to his notions of what translation should be.'

It should be added that nothing in this Introduction sheds so much light on the *Propertius* as certain things in the three essays which appeared as the pamphlet *Homage to John Dryden*. The *Propertius* (though it will only now become generally accessible) first appeared as early as 1918. The three essays belong to 1921 and 1922, so that it is reasonable to assume that Mr. Eliot was familiar with the *Propertius* when he wrote them. More significant is the fact that *Mauberley* first appeared in 1920, two years after the *Propertius*.

There is, in addition, the earlier verse and there are, since the *Propertius* and *Mauberley*, the *Cantos*. This is not the place for a detailed consideration of the relative merits of these. I can only testify, here, that the earlier verse and, in spite of Mr. Eliot's enthusiasm for them, the greater part of the *Cantos* seem to me very inferior verse in comparison with the *Propertius* and *Mauberley* ; and in this I find myself still in agreement with Mr. Leavis's judgment in *New Bearings* and also, to this extent, with Mr. Blackmur's in the *Hound and Horn* (Jan.-March, 1934). The idea has, however, got about (I think Mr. Eliot's Introduction is partly responsible for it) that even if the *Cantos* are in certain respects deficient the younger men may learn an enormous amount from

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a close study of the versification. But it is precisely because I seldom find in the *Cantos* (in spite of the labour which has obviously been expended on the versification) anything like the varied metrical subtlety I find in the *Propertius* and, especially, *Mauberley* that I find the *Cantos* deficient by comparison. It seems to me, therefore, that it is from the *Propertius* and *Mauberley* rather than from the *Cantos* that whatever of the value may be learned from Mr. Pound will be learned, and that this is as much as to say that they are the better poems.

It is at this point that I am forced to record a disagreement with Mr. Blackmur, the more reluctantly as he was one of the first in America to recognize Mr. Eliot and to give good reasons for that recognition. He says (in the article to which I have referred):

'For Mr. Pound is at his best a maker of great verse rather than a great poet. When you look into him, deeply as you can, you will not find any extraordinary revelation of life, nor any bottomless fund of feeling; nor will you find any mode of life formulated, any collection of established feelings, composed or mastered in new form.'

Mr. Blackmur agrees that Mr. Pound is 'at his best' in the *Propertius* and in *Mauberley*. He agrees also that they are 'great verse.' That 'great verse' seems to me itself the most reliable evidence there can be of the presence of those things which Mr. Blackmur, in the passage quoted, says are absent. The 'verse' seems to me 'great' as the result of a pressure of experience against it which it composes and the *Propertius* and *Mauberley* therefore 'great poetry' because 'great verse.'

I cannot, either, accept Mr. Blackmur's preference of the *Propertius* to *Mauberley*—

'The first [*Mauberley*] is Mr. Pound's most nearly, in the ordinary sense, 'original' work, and the second [the *Propertius*] as a translation, the least. The reverse ascriptions are in fact more accurate; and the paradox is verbal not substantial. The substance of *Mauberley*, what it is about, is commonplace, but what the translator has contributed to *Propertius* is his finest personal work.' The *Propertius* and *Mauberley* seem to me to be great in the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same kind of way. But because *Mauberley* seems to me to possess in greater degree what the *Propertius* also possesses I consider it the greater poem. When Mr. Eliot said of *Mauberley*, ' It is compact of the experience of a certain man in a certain place at a certain time ; and it is also a document of an epoch ; it is genuine tragedy and comedy ; and it is, in the best sense of Arnold's phrase, a " criticism of life," ' he said something which could be said to a lesser extent also of the *Propertius* but which, as Mr. Leavis pointed out, could scarcely be said of the earlier verse or of the *Cantos*.

There remains to reinforce these opinions by some more particular consideration of the *Propertius* itself. The sophistication of the verse here is no surface thing. It indicates the deeper sophistication of one who is ' expert from experience '—centuries of experience. A critical self-knowledge is his reward:

For I am swelled up with inane pleasurabilities
and deceived by your reference
To things which you think I would like to believe

is, of course, said ironically. The constant ' inspection ' of his experience is indicated, also, by the frequent employment of non-emotive words.

This is what I meant when I called Mr. Pound ' late.' The urbanity of tone belongs to one who is exceedingly (I would not say excessively) civilized. A sense that the experience he is temporarily concerned with is relative to the sum of experience and is not absolute, a sense of proportion, a poise, proceeds from this ' lateness,' this sense of centuries of experience. In No. VII, for example, where there is a tendency to passionate excess, the balance is redressd first by the suggestion of satiety, then more particularly by the phrase

such at least is the story.

There follow magnificent lines, the theme completely traditional, Epicurean, and the poem ends—

God am I, for the time

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—the final emphasis on ' for the time.' No. IX is again completely traditional in theme, and ought on that account to be readily appreciated: also it opens with canorous splendour:[1] it continues—

I shall live, if she continue in life.
If she dies, I shall go with her.
Great Zeus, save the woman,
Or she will sit before your feet in a veil, and tell out the long list of her troubles.

The intensity of concern in these lines is not mitigated because controlled by the apparent levity of the last two. The poem continues—

Persephone and Dis, Dis, have mercy upon her,
There are enough women in hell, quite enough beautiful women
Iope, and Tyro, and Pasiphae, and the formal girls of Achaia,
And out of Troad, and from the Campania,
Death has its tooth in the lot.

These lines have behind them not only Latin poetry (and Greek) but also Provençal poetry and Villon. What transforms the traditional theme, gives it a new body of strength, is that ' hell ' and, more especially, the colloquialism at the end.

But this balance between the formal and the informal, between conventional elegance and conversational ease, is not merely a matter of the insertion of contemporary colloquialisms. The diction includes, for example, the ' scientific ' Latinisms ' torridity ' and ' canicular ' (No. VIII).

The time is come, the air heaves in torridity,
The dry earth pants against the canicular heat.

It is, rather, a freedom from Poetic Diction which allows of this

---

[1]For the nobleness of the populace brooks nothing below its own altitude.
One must have resonance, resonance and sonority . . . like a goose. (No. XII).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wide range of selection. The result is that a total variety (and also a complexity) of mood finds its expression, and this is what is pointed to not only by the variety of the diction but by the variety also of the versification (contrast the comparatively monotonous versification of the *Cantos*). The mood modulates between the tragic and the comic. There is broad comedy, broadening in places to farce, in No. IV:

Damp woolly handkerchiefs were stuffed into her undryable eyes,
And a querulous noise responded to our solicitous reprobations.

Cynthia's supposed abuse of her rival follows:

" she twiddles the spiked wheel of a rhombus,
' She stews puffed frogs, snake's bones, the moulted feathers of screech owls,
' She binds me with ravvles of shrouds.
' Black spiders spin in her bed!
' Let her lovers snore at her in the morning!
' May the gout cramp up her feet!
' Does he like me to sleep here alone, Lygdamus?
' Will he say nasty things at my funeral? ' "

The poem ends with an ironical comment. In No. X there is again broad comedy. The poet is drunk and loses his way.

' And she has been waiting for the scoundrel,
and in a new Sidonian night cap,
And with more than Arabian odours,
god knows where he has been.'

He arrives in the early morning instead, curious to know if Cynthia has been faithful or not—' And Cynthia was alone in her bed '—

' You are a very early inspector of mistresses.
' Do you think I have adopted your habits? '

I need not labour the contrast between these and any earlier quotations.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Before passing finally to indicate what seem to me the more significant Numbers I ought to stress the element of 'mockery' in Mr. Pound's *Propertius* (whether or not, as Mr. Eliot thinks, it is present also in the Latin Propertius) for it, perhaps, has its significance in relation to them. It is markedly present in the earlier part of No. XII.

Who, who will be the next man to entrust his girl to a friend?
Love interferes with fidelities;
The gods have brought shame on their relatives;
Each man wants the pomegranate for himself.

It comes (it will be noted) from a knowledge of human—and Divine—weakness. The Olympians are not exempt (No. VIII)

Was Venus exacerbated by the existence of a comparable equal?
Is the ornamental goddess full of envy?
Have you contempted Juno's Pelasgian temples,
Have you denied Pallas good eyes?

nor the heroes from disrespect (No. XII):

and there was a case in Colchis, Jason and that woman in Colchis.

But because no one is without weakness there is a certain tolerance. The poet is disillusioned enough to expect the worst, even of his friend Lynceus, and is therefore not annoyed, or ever surprised, when he finds it. The mockery of Lynceus (No. XII) is playful rather than serious; there is at any rate no question of the termination of the friendship as the result of what has happened. The poet can say also of his mistress (No. XI):

All things are forgiven for one night of your games . . .
Though you walk in the Via Sacra, with a peacock's tail for a fan.

Numbers I, II, V, VI, XII, seem to me the more personal Numbers, in the sense not that they are the less, but the more, significant Numbers. In these the interests are recognizable, beneath the disguises, as substantially those of *Mauberley*. The poetry seems to derive (as Mr. Leavis remarks of *Mauberley*) from a 'recognition of bankruptcy, of a devoted life summed up in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

futility.' The poet cannot believe in the ' importance ' of ' Cæsar's affairs,' War (the poem was written during the War) and Empire, the things which seem most ' important ' and are, of course, not.

(No. I) Annalists will continue to record Roman reputations,
Celebrities from the Trans-Caucasus will belaud Roman celebrities
And expound the distentions of Empire,
But for something to read in normal circumstances?
For a few pages brought down from the forked hill unsullied?
I ask a wreath which will not crush my head.

(No. II) Alba, your kings, and the realm your folk have constructed with such industry
Shall be yawned out on my lyre—with such industry

(No. V) And I shall follow the camp, I shall be duly celebrated for singing the affairs of your cavalry.

But in spite of the best of intentions, he is in fact not equal, he says, to the ' heroic ' (No. II)

And Phoebus looking upon me from the Castalian tree,
Said then ' You idiot! What are you doing with that water ;
Who has ordered a book about heroes?
You need, Propertius, not think
About acquiring that sort of a reputation.'

' Cæsar's affairs ' and ' everything else of importance ' are weighed down in the balance by ' a girl '—' I also shall sing war when this matter of a girl is exhausted.'

(No. V) Neither Calliope nor Apollo sung these things into my ear,
My genius is no more than a girl.
If she with ivory fingers drive a tune through the lyre,
We look at the process

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How easy the moving fingers ; if hair is mussed on
her forehead,
If she goes in a gleam of Cos, in a slither of dyed stuff,
There is a volume in the matter ; if her eyelids sink
into sleep,
There are new jobs for the author,
And if she plays with me with her shirt off,
We shall construct many Iliads.
And whatever she does or says
We shall spin long yarns out of nothing.

He continues, later in the same Number ;

I should remember Cæsar's affairs . . . for a back-
ground,
Although Callimachus did without them, and without
Theseus,
Without an inferno.

It amuses him (No. XII)

Of all these young women
not one has enquired the cause of the world,
Nor the modus of lunar eclipses
Nor whether there be any patch left of us
After we cross the infernal ripples,
nor if the thunder fall from predestination ;
Nor anything else of importance.

The deepest thing in the *Propertius* is this sense of emptiness, of there being nothing whatever left after one has ' looked into the matter.' It is related to the poet's sense of personal failure

(No. VI) Nor at my funeral either will there be any long trail,
bearing ancestral lares and images ;
No trumpets filled with my emptiness,
Nor shall it be on an Atalic bed ;
The perfumed cloths shall be absent.
A small plebian procession.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(No. XII) And behold me, small fortune left in my house.
Me, who had no general for a grandfather!
I shall triumph among young ladies of indeterminate character,
My talent acclaimed in their banquets,
I shall be honoured with yesterday's wreathes.

Beneath the surface trifling and frivolity of the poem there is an agonized sense of tragic waste.

It remains only to say that, in my judgment, the *Propertius* will hereafter be recognized along with *Mauberley* and, therefore, along also with the poetry of Mr. Eliot and the later poetry of Mr. Yeats as one of the few remarkable poetic achievements of the time.

JOHN SPEIRS.

THE BALCONY, by Adrian Bell (Cobden Sanderson, 7/6).

The Balcony gives an account of the experiences of the boy Roland Pace from early childhood to near the end of his time at prep. school. The form of his memories is that common to most of us—' isolated spots or patches brightly illumined and vividly seen in the midst of a wide shrouded mental landscape.' The incidents so recalled are not of exceptional intrinsic interest, nor is there any profound analysis of the child's reactions to them. But the book is a satisfying and valuable achievement if only because it is in part a successful attempt to convey in words ' the daydream of those early years . . . which is the foundation of one's attitude to life,' when ' colour, form, scent and sound have in daily life the suggestiveness which is later to be evoked only in great art.' It is consequently an assertion of the great value to the child of ' this knowledge got by gazing,' of which the writer says ' it was to me as those coiled tendrils by which the bryony climbs—a delicate and daring unfolding which ridicule withered like frost.'

Mr. Bell has succeeded in fusing what was important to the child with what is important, or, more dangerously, amusing, to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the grown-up. Now the direct impressions of the child are given, and now these impressions are ranged in a pattern for adult appreciation without any belittlement of childish values. The simpler reactions to sights and sounds—soap bubbles and his father's snores—are presented from the boy's point of view alone, but more complicated appraisals of character are usually completed in the light of later knowledge ; for instance, the description of the great aunts—' What personalities they developed within those glistening black garments. Not a limb had they—but they had a head, ears and eyes and nose and lips. With those they took the air like convalescents, and having so little, they were thankful for having so much.' As Roland grows older the visual world only intermittently maintains its magical powers of promise and fulfilment, and the influence of personality becomes stronger. Mr. Bell's talent for suggesting character—for noting the saliences of personality rather than tracing its development—is as well employed in Roland's prep. school, where a uniform of immaculate silk hats and Victorian driving coats does not make for uniformity of character, as in Suffolk farm life. He possesses too a sensitive and humorous discrimination, both a lively observation and a reticence, a readiness to appreciate where it is possible and to state without comment where it is not. The style has a pleasing assurance ; in place of any uneasy feeling for the interest and admiration of the reader in expression or matter there is a welcome reliance on the common taste of reader and writer.

SYLVIA LEGGE.

THE LAND OF PLENTY, by Robert Cantwell (Bell, 7/6).

This is a representative example of a type of novel that will obviously play an increasingly important part in the development of fiction. It has been described as the ' proletarian ' novel, a misleading and vague description which appears, on examination, merely to mean a novel concerned with the conditions of the proletariat of to-day—and, of course, embodying a protest against them. It differs from the Victorian ' humanitarian ' novel in its bitterness and the vehemence of its protest. It is not concerned

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with arousing sympathy for the workers, but with condemning the system that makes this sympathy necessary. In most instances, subtlety is sacrificed to violence, but the result usually contains far more vitality and interest than the dignified and null works of most of our best-known novelists.

The Land of Plenty has many faults and can scarcely be said to be a good novel. It attempts to combine a certain amount of impartial, psychological approach with that division into capital and labour, black and white, that is advocated by many modern Russian authors and finds its practical expression in the Russian theatre (see Markov—*The Soviet Theatre*—Gollancz). It is, perhaps, inevitable that the type of literature that reached its highest points in Proust and Joyce will decline and merge into new forms, and this undue simplification may be a necessary stage in the development of literature ; but, at the moment, it seems clumsy and irritating. Mr. Cantwell complicates his position by beginning his story through the mind of Carl, the officious foreman and efficiency expert who is the cause of the strike which is the main theme of the book. The next section is through the eyes of Hagen, the elderly electrician, who is Carl's chief opponent. This method is used throughout, six or seven characters taking turns as focal points. But, about half-way through, the natural impartiality of this method is abandoned, and every care is taken to bring our sympathy to the strikers ; in the first part, this was done merely by a rather sentimental tone towards Hagen and his friends—in the second, Carl and the representatives of Capitalism are pushed to the background, and the author becomes incapable of seeing with their eyes. Indeed, all through there is a tendency to pile on the agony—the old device of the worker with the sick wife distracts our attention instead of deepening our sympathy ; the author's case should be strong enough without this sort of thing. It seems almost as if Mr. Cantwell began by intending to condemn the system, of which foreman and manager were as much victims as the workman, but then decided that, being masters of the others, they must become villains of the piece. The almost farcical episode of Carl and MacMahon, the manager, getting lost underneath the factory, seems to be intended merely to make these agents of capitalism as ridiculous as possible.

An interesting point is the character of Connor, the college-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boy worker who wishes to be friendly with both sides. After committing an act which, we understand, no true worker would do, he eventually finds himself on the owners' side in the strike, but is used to point the moral, for, as he watches the owner and the manager—incarnations of grossness and weakness—he reflects 'These are the people we do it for. These are the ones.' The moral seems to be that college-boys, however willing, can never be genuine workers, and that the workers have every right to regard them with suspicion!

Mr. Cantwell borrows an irritating trick from the 'tough' American novelists, of endeavouring to describe a conversation by constant repetition of trite phrases and 'he said.' The result is unreadable and unrealistic.

But he has vivid powers of description; the fight between police and strikers is excellent, and the invasion of the factory in the rainstorm. And he has a thorough knowledge of the background against which the story is placed, which ensures convincingness all through the book, which, with all its obvious faults, can, unlike most contemporary novels, be read without a sense of wasted time.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

THE SOLID VIRTUES

CLAUDIUS THE GOD, by Robert Graves (Arthur Barker, 10/6 net.).

Mr. Graves has well succeeded in what seems to have been his object—to give by careful reconstruction a convincing idea of the memoirs of an imperial Roman statesman written according to the perspective of the period. He has been very thorough. Nothing known or guessed about Claudius can have been omitted and an immense amount of plausible detail has been invented. The foreword gives a roll-call of authorities and sources and states the English and American equivalents of the Roman moneys, and two long genealogies on folding sheets have been provided. Details of public works and policies, of ceremonies and campaigns, are all made palatable, and it is easy to go on reading right to the end unless you think of something you want to do. For those who

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prefer reading to gardening at the week-end this book will be thoroughly welcome.

Even by more exacting standards you can at least read the whole book and retain your self-respect. The English is matter-of-fact and colloquial, and although just enough is made of the sexual incidents to send thrills down respectable spines still there is no crude sensationalism. The view of Claudius as an unwilling dictator with democratic ideals in an age without them has some present-day relevance, and his exhibition of just that pattern of excellences and defects which would isolate him, and win the contempt of inferior contemporaries, is not grossly—though it is slightly—sentimental. The most interesting part of the book, the only part with any pressure behind it, is the end, in its presentation of Claudius' tired cynicism towards the kind of affairs his active years had been devoted to, and his realization that his efforts could have contributed nothing to the ideal he had held for Rome. It is only here for a few pages that the story has any of the interest that one might have hoped for on the strength of some of Mr. Graves' poetry.

Except for this it is just part of the movement which is rediscovering the value of taking pains, being intelligible, and avoiding intellectual and emotional inflation. Control is the essence of the movement, but most of its exponents lack any force that demands control. The result is the academic, with all its virtues and lifelessness.

D.W.H.

EARLY VICTORIAN NOVELISTS, by Lord David Cecil (Constable, 10/-).

Lord David Cecil admits in his prefatory note that this is a slight book, and asks that it be judged as such ; so we may assume that he did not mean to offer anything new on the Victorian novel. His essays merely tabulate the merits and faults of the authors concerned—with, of course, the merits predominating.

Both merits and faults are the obvious ones and, in most of the essays, the conclusions are unexceptional though, perhaps, scarcely worth repeating when they can be found in many other

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

works on the same subject. However, to have them altogether in one volume would be quite useful. Lord Cecil, if he was not attempting fresh discussion, should have been content to leave it at that. Instead, he tries to explain the author's characteristics in language that often sounds impressive but is inclined to lack meaning, he exaggerates various traits in order to make large claims for his authors, and he seems unable to make a statement without embroidering it with two or three lifeless metaphors, a gentle cadence, or a piece of more or less irrelevant descriptive writing. If we can disentangle Lord David Cecil's meaning from this clinging growth, the book turns out to be an enthusiastic and unassuming—though slightly patronizing—account of its subject that might quite well attract readers to the Victorian novel. As it is, many will be put off by the manner of presentation—criticism here is creation ' manqué,' and the trimmings are the manifestations of the thwarted impulse.

The introductory chapter ends with reminiscences of Sir Thomas Browne (?). ' For the achievements of the art of letters, the fall of a phrase, a man or a moment made vivid in a few scrawls of ink, can survive, fresh with all the glowing tints of youth, when towered temples and embattled cities have become no more than sunshine and silence and a chip of stone in the sand.' The perfect dying fall. And Charlotte Brontë is presented to us, as follows, ' . . . the gale rages under the elemental sky, while indoors, their faces rugged in the fierce firelight, austere figures of no clearly defined class or period declare eternal love and hate to one another in phrases of stilted eloquence and staggering candour.' These passages are not really intended to mean anything—merely to put the reader in a receptive frame of mind ; it would be a waste of time to inquire into the exact meaning of this sentence describing *Wuthering Heights*—' A pure clear morning light irradiates it ; a wind keen with the tang of virgin snow blows through its pages.' The mischief is that this is the sort of book that may be given to Higher School candidates to read, and their style will probably be modelled accordingly. They may even imitate its whimsicality, as when we are told that the difference between Mrs. Gaskell and her feminine literary contemporaries is summed up in the ' Mrs.' that she alone bears before her name in admirers' minds.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lord David Cecil's conclusions, as I have said, do not, as a whole, call for much discussion, except for his exaggerated opinion of Thackeray, and the essay on George Eliot which shows that his standards of criticism have been to some extent the usual misleading ones of ' character ' and ' pleasure.' George Eliot receives full recognition for her intellectual superiority, but Lord David Cecil, though realizing it to be her chief asset, seems to be repelled by it and finds her inferior to Dickens in ' creative imagination.' ' Lydgate is far more like a real man than Mr. Micawber, we know much more about him . . . But he is not so alive . . . [Her characters] never seem, as the greatest figures in fiction do, to have got free from their creators, and to be acting and speaking of their own volition.' The suspicion that this means only that Dickens is easier to read is confirmed on the last page where the comparison is with Mrs. Gaskell—' *Middlemarch* may never give us the same feeling of unalloyed pleasure as *Wives and Daughters* does, but it rouses far deeper emotions, sets the mind far more seriously astir.' The criterion of pleasure implied here is bound to be misleading in serious criticism.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

THE CRITICISM OF BALLET

BALLETOMANIA, by Arnold L. Haskell (Gollancz, 18/-).

There is much to be said for regarding ballet, at the present time, as an art form of considerable importance. With the failure of the symbolist and expressionist movements, ballet remains the only popular alternative to the current drama of social realism. And interest in the modern ballet is, as most recent writings on the subject show, stimulated or at least supported by the frustrations imposed by the ordinary theatre. But apart from this accidental significance it seems to-day more obvious than ever before that the ballet possesses an intrinsic importance ; through the medium of classical dancing it can offer satisfactions which, however they are to be explained, are unique.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As far as the theatre is concerned, the situation has not changed much between the return of the Diaghilev ballet after the war and the arrival of the new Russian ballet in 1932. T. S. Eliot's comment in *The Dial* in 1921 is as relevant now as when it was written: 'Two years ago M. Diaghilev's ballet arrived . . . we greeted the Good-humoured Ladies, and the Boutique Fantasque, and the Three-cornered Hat, as the dawn of an art of the theatre . . . The ballet will probably be one of the influences forming a new drama, if a new drama ever comes. I mean, of course, the later ballet which has just been mentioned; for the earlier ballet, if it had greater dancers—Nijinsky or Pavlova—had far less significance or substantiality. The later ballet is more sophisticated, but also more simplified, and simplifies more; and what is needed of art is simplification of current life into something rich and strange.'

When, three years later, Eliot again contrasted the ballet with the realistic theatrical tradition, there was a slight shift of stress: what seemed important now was not the modern ballets but the impersonality of the ballet dancer. Whereas the actor's 'stage personality has to be supplied from and confounded with his real personality,' we observe in the ballet 'that the man or the woman whom we admire is a being who exists only during the performances, that it is a personality, a vital flame which appears from nowhere, disappears into nothing and is complete and sufficient in its appearance' (*Four Elizabethan Dramatists*). This may not appear very explicit but it is a formulation that one comes back to again and again as a statement of the meaning and importance of the classical tradition of dancing. A similar progress from an interest in the ballet's handling of current life to an appreciation of the essential qualities of classical dancing is recorded by Adrian Stokes[1] and is probably fairly general.

Mr. Haskell's book is very largely concerned with the personalities of dancers off the stage. At first glance it consists almost entirely of reported gossip, but apart from the trivia of the dancers' daily lives there are records of interesting conversations with the most distinguished of living choreographers—Fokine, Massine, and Balanchine—on their methods. First-hand information of this kind

[1] *To-Night the Ballet* (Faber, 3/6).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the many facts assembled, however scrappily, on the development of the modern ballet, make the book useful as a historical source, a usefulness which is greatly increased by the sixty-three excellent photographs.

Mr. Haskell's larger claim to have constructed at least a personal framework for the criticism of ballet is hardly supported. He does, however, write as a technically trained spectator able to assess the skill, and observe the pecularities of skill, of every dancer. Moreover, he appreciates the personality of the dancers, not only as people, but as dancers, though without ever responding as sensitively as Adrian Stokes—in his book and even more in his periodical criticism—to individual qualities or style. It is significant that neither writer has attempted to say anything whatever on the temperament or style expressed in the dancing of such artists as Massine and Woizikowski. ' The mature Massine is the biggest personality I have seen in ballet ' says Mr. Haskell, and leaves it at that, although he has so much specific comment to offer on the lesser dancers. One is forced to suppose that this inarticulateness in our two most expert critics of ballet is further evidence of the impersonality of the greatest dancers. (Similarly, no one who saw or knew Nijinsky has been able to say anything about his personality, either as a man or a mimetic dancer, and the ' personality ' is completely absent in the biography by his wife). Of this impersonality Mr. Haskell has no conception, and nothing has been added by anyone to T. S. Eliot's suggestion in 1924.

The undeveloped state of the criticism of ballet is particularly unfortunate at a time when the ballet is not only exceptionally vigorous and has a wider appeal than ever but is also going through a momentous development (out of, but not outside, the classical tradition), a time then when the art of ballet needs the support and collaboration of intelligent critical response even more than the public enthusiasm which both Haskell and Stokes are so anxious to raise to a still higher pitch. The new ' symphonic ' ballets, as far removed from the sophisticated post-war ballets as they are from the early national romantic ballet of Russia, clearly stand in need of more relevant and precise criticism than they have yet received. How far these are important as works of art in themselves remains to be judged, however one may agree on their importance as choreography: the old distinction between mime and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dance having been abandoned, the alternation of principal dances and ensembles is giving way to co-ordination, and a more complex and homogeneous composition achieved, starting from and preserving the essentials of the classical tradition, as well as extending its range of movements. The new choreography is more integrated, and integrates more. But the business of criticism is not only to register a perfection of medium, it should also concern itself with what the choreographer is trying to say. And the emotions and attitudes which the new ballet communicates with such very effective success remain to be analyzed and evaluated.

In the absence of a criticism seriously interested in the problems of the ballet as theatrical art, it is a good thing that classical dancing should be generally recognized as the great form it is. Incidentally, classical dancing at its best, and only at its best, seems capable of conveying feelings apparently independent of the specific feeling, if any, which a dancer is employed to express or indicate in a given situation. Even when the obvious sentiments are insignificant or cheap, the dancer's performance may have a detached and uncontaminated intensity which obliberates all the rest—a fact which isolates the classical dancer from any other performer. Ultimately, it is in the achievements of the great dancer that the classical tradition receives a meaning. And, as T. S. Eliot, again, has said, ' the difference between a great dancer and a merely competent dancer is in the vital flame, that impersonal, and, if you like, inhuman force which transpires between each of the great dancer's movements.' The quality of anonymous revelation—*la terrible célérité de la perfection des formes et de l'action*—visible in the great dancer ' thus devoted, concentrated in purpose ' is only attainable through the ascetic training and narrow limits he submits to.

ERIK MESTERTON.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A PUBLIC FOR ART IN INDUSTRY

THE STUDY OF ART, by R. H. Wilenski (Faber and Faber, 7/6 net).

THE CONQUEST OF UGLINESS, edited by John de La Valette, with a foreword by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales (Methuen, 8/6 net).

ART AND INDUSTRY, by Herbert Read (Faber and Faber, 12/6 net).

PICTURE MAKING BY CHILDREN, by R. R. Tomlinson (Studio, 7/6 net).

THE TEACHING OF ART IN SCHOOLS, by Evelyn Gibbs (Williams and Norgate, 12/6 net).

In what seems an obsessionally neat piece of pigeon-holing, Mr. Wilenski has sorted into their ' functional categories ' all whom he calls ' students ' of art, *i.e.*, not only style experts, aestheticians, historians, critics, etc., but also restorers, forgers, dealers, and owners. A large part of the book is concerned to define the legitimate activities of each specialist. For general purposes the vital distinction is between the historian and the critic ; it is a distinction of particular importance in art, where the critic too often supports his criticism with a supposed historical conception which in fact turns out to be based on the historian's own bastard criticism.

Criticism, according to Mr. Wilenski, has very wide responsibilities: first, it must formulate clearly its conception of the nature and general value of art ; second, it must study the artist psychologically ; third, it must show in what sense the picture represents the artist ; and fourth, it must assess the value of the work of art to a particular spectator. The proviso ' to a particular spectator ' is necessary since Mr. Wilenski insists on the relativity of critical judgments, denying the existence of ' universally applicable objective standards of " goodness " and " badness " in art.'

And although he goes into minute detail about each of the functions which comprise the study of art, including art criticism,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he successfully avoids any exposition of his own relative critical standards. As he admits, much of his book consists in a systematic exposition of the familiar, and as such it serves a useful purpose without being exciting reading. It is certain that if even the most familiar of his underlying ideas could be more generally acted upon, both art history and art criticism would be in a healthier state, bringing the spectator into more direct touch with works of art, instead of interposing concealed prejudices between him and them.

The Conquest of Ugliness is full of such prejudices masquerading as authoritative criticism. The Conquerors are followers of fashion or national traditionalists, with a hearty sporting editor to lead them against ' anæmic aesthetes,' among whom they would certainly include Mr. Herbert Read, since his excellent book on their own subject provides a standard against which their feebleness can be measured. It would be splitting hairs to point out that some of the contributors are not as feeble as others ; the one or two writers who threaten to say something of interest have been carefully edited into nonentity.

Mr. Read begins by distinguishing between ' *humanistic art,* which is concerned with the expression in plastic form of human ideals or emotions: and *abstract art,* or non-figurative art, which has no concern beyond making objects whose plastic form appeals to the aesthetic sensibility,' and he contends that ' the utilitarian arts—that is to say, objects designed primarily for use—have the appeal of abstract art.' The qualities essential to humanistic art ' can only be rendered by the subtlest and most sensitive means, which will always be human means ' ; but ' whenever the final product of the machine is designed or determined by anyone sensitive to formal values, that product can and does become an abstract work of art.' These formal values—subtle proportions, ' the appeal of lines and masses harmoniously organized, forms which respect the material and assert function '—are illustrated in a hundred and thirty excellent photographs, with comparisons and contrasts pointed in the captions. The essence of Mr. Read's proposals for art in industry lies in his insistence that ' the artist must design in the actual materials of the factory, and in the full stream of the process of production,' and that his designs shall be ' solutions of the immediate practical problems of the day.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ornament is suspect, justified only when it emphasizes form ; and then only stylized or geometric decoration is within the compass of the machine. Mr. Read rejects the ' whole humanistic tradition, at least in so far as it concerns objects of use ' and goes back to the ' older tradition which offers many analogies to the new tradition emerging to-day. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as in the fifth century B.C., there existed in Northern Europe and in Greece respectively, phases of architectural development, and of industrial design generally, that have never been excelled in history. There is one significant fact about such periods: they are without an aesthetic. What they did, they did as the solution of practical problems, without taste, without academic tradition.'

The Conquest of Ugliness stands for taste—connoisseurship—and academic tradition. The President of the Royal Academy would have ' artists and manufacturers make machines serve the requirement of good taste ' ; the Editor has it that the industrial arts ' attempt to impart beauty to the work of man's own hands.' This—if it means anything at all—means that art is external to industry, and can be ' applied,' and that the machine is just another tool to be abused for the production of ' artistic ' shapes in the Wallace Collection tradition. And naturalistic ornament is, as usual, advanced as the essential element in art. ' To a thing made with art, art may further apply whatever seems delightful and not inappropriate to its occasion. A landscape may be applied as legitimately to a teacup as to a canvas, a bas-relief as legitimately to a cabinet as to a temple frieze,' writes Profesor Goodhart-Rendel. Machines, that is, may provide the ' pure ' artist with surfaces and reproduce on them examples of his pictorial skill. As such they are never more than unsatisfactory substitutes for the artist, mere multipliers tolerated through enonomic necessity, instead of being regarded as tools with peculiar qualities through which the artist may produce works of art. But production of this latter sort is dismissed as ' skilful manufacture of useful things ' and ' sentimental Puritanism.' In spite of the Editor's assertions that now industrial art is to be ' exuberant,' ' vigorous ' and ' healthy,' his illustrations—' an exquisite evening handbag of feather and pearl embroidery on flamingo satin ' or a rug with a motif of feathers and tassels—show it to be, as one expects, merely insipid society entertainment.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The essay, ' Rousing the Young,' by the Board of Education's Staff Inspector, seems unlikely to get very far. Each teacher is to train children to pick out ' good ' from ' bad ' art, which means (see Wilenski) that each teacher passes on personal preferences bolstered up to pass as universal standards which will almost certainly prevent appreciation of some kinds of art. There is no reason why teachers should not try to give reasons and make demonstrations in favour of their preferences—*Art in Industry* is an admirable example of a personal standard demonstrated and illustrated—so long as it is clear that they may be accepted or rejected, and no claims are made that to accept such standards is to have grasped ' true art.' If you can't persuade others that your approach ends in a more satisfying experience, you're only converting the situation to a personal satisfaction by damning theirs.

That teachers' personal preferences are passed on to children is clear from *Picture Making by Children* (a collection of reproductions of children's ' imaginative ' work useful for people who are unfamiliar with child symbolism or for reference for educationists). But so long as children have plenty of contacts with all sorts of standards in lessons when they aren't themselves producing, there is hope that they may gradually arrive at some kind of standard of their own. But in fact Mr. Tomlinson (like the New Education Fellowship) rules out such contacts as unnecessary. This is because he and the Fellowship regard *all* children as artists, that is, primarily producers and not ' consumers ' of art, who must be sheltered from outside influences which they might imitate, although at the same time they are supposed to be perpetually nourished ' from within.' But unfortunately most of these producing artists dry up at puberty, when other forms of expression become more satisfying. It is then proposed that the child shall be taught techniques to tide him over adolescence (or rather, probably, until he leaves school and some other authority, not committed to regarding him as an artist, becomes responsible for him). If instead, producing ' art ' was regarded as a useful means of detecting potential designers (genuine artists being rare) and as a necessary stage of expression through which children pass in their development, a more healthy attitude might exist than one finds in the prostration of educationists like Mr. Tomlinson before children's ' creativeness.'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Gibbs' book, although not free from this attitude, does seem to be a step in the right direction. She, as usual, encourages children to ' express ' themselves in imaginative drawings, but this includes ' not only fantasy but also robust memories of every-day life.' By using these drawings as designs for craftwork, children learn for themselves the modifications which material and technique make on design, and in working ' the child begins to sense consciously through the interpretation what (in the way of design) he has done purely instinctively in his painting.' Since Miss Gibbs uses means (such as Miss Marion Richardson's) for getting children who are not ' gifted ' to produce stylized patterns, most of her pupils can learn by experience enough of the process of design to help them in appreciation. But her scheme is not so complete as the title *The Teaching of Art in Schools* suggests. Pupils are taught to see *pattern* values (the relation of the parts of a broken plane surface to each other and to the whole) but *plastic formal* values are included only (if at all) in life drawing and then the stress is on the pattern produced by the addition of shapes in the background, as in Chinese portraits. As the book deals only with figure compositions translated into lino cuts or appliqué, all-over patterns made into lino or potato blocks, and lettering, this concentration on plane surfaces will tend to limit appreciation to the pictorial approach of the *Conquest of Ugliness*.

The problem as a whole is seen more completely by Mr. Read in his section on education (with the D.I.A.'s Memorandum on Art Schools in an appendix). The separate training of producers and consumers is insisted on. Industrial artists are to be separated from ' fine ' artists and trained in school-factories, like the Bauhaus, primarily as craftsmen. The education of the consumer is naturally not worked out in detail, but Professor Moholy-Nagy's method of training sense perceptions is put forward as a possibility, and the analysis of natural forms is cited as relevant to the appreciation of formal values. Mr. Wilenski's recommendations for the training of critics have obvious relevance to the training of teachers, and Miss Gibbs' work would be valuable in a framework such as Mr. Read indicates. It is in this field of training in appreciation that most still remains to be done, but here at any rate is a beginning.

J. M. HARDING.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOCIOLOGY, by Morris Ginsberg (Thornton Butterworth, Home University Library, 2/6).

The increasing integration of all aspects of modern society is accompanied in the social sciences by an ever growing tendency to increasing specialization. The political scientist, with one or two honourable exceptions, remains untainted by social psychology, and the pure economist maintains his purity against the historian with a fervour and dignity worthy of a better cause. It is clearly the job of the sociologist to attempt a synthesis of the various specialisms, but it is a reflection of the lowly estate of this science that we have had to wait till now for the H.U.L. to publish the present volume. It is an interesting question, but one which cannot here be discussed, why sociology is so backward in England and yet so developed (till 1933) in Germany.

Some of the chapters in the book are marvels of compactness, particularly the chapter 'Race and Environment.' In forty-five short pages we are given a remarkably adequate summary of what is really known on this difficult and important problem: there is no place for mythology in the discussion and for this reason it is to be commended to the notice of eugenists and race fanatics alike. Where it is a question of giving a guiding opinion through a maze of conflicting views, *e.g.* on the topic of 'Social Classes and Economic Organization,' the author is not so authoritative, but each subject touched upon, aspects of mental development, growth of societies, etc., is handled comprehensively.

There are two criticisms which must be made: they are different aspects of the same thing. There appears to be no inherent reason why the subjects discussed should happen to be those chosen. In other words we can find no indication of the inter-relatedness, if this exists, of the various problems attacked, *i.e.* there is here no real attempt at a synthetic study of society. Secondly, we do not get the sense when reading that we are dealing with live and burning issues. Surely the relevance of the discussion on race to recent events in Germany and elsewhere should be brought out. Professor Ginsberg contents himself with criticism, which is admirably done, but any creative approach is lacking.

H. W. DURANT.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE TWILIGHT OF PARENTHOOD, by Enid Charles (Watts, 7/6).

'By all sections of the Acquisitive Society children have now come to be regarded as a form of capital expenditure which brings the parent no return commensurate with its investment value to the society as a whole.' (*The Twilight of Parenthood*, p. 219).

The gloomy predictions of Malthus (suggesting over population and under production as the fate of the human race) are to-day evidently and appallingly far from the truth. The present uneven distribution of the means of existence amongst the various classes of society does not blind the more sensitive applied scientist to the fact that his immediate function is by no means as obvious as it might be. An American scientist has commented, referring to the recent destruction of cotton, tobacco, pigs, etc., as a corrective to over production, 'If this will bring national prosperity I have wasted my life.' Human ingenuity is now capable of producing more than its present organization is able to deal with. Redistributed, it is probable that this excess could be absorbed; or the efforts resulting could be redirected: but so far from the risks of over population causing anxiety, the new light on the statistics of natality and mortality suggest that under population is the more immediate problem. The opinions of Malthus can, on occasion, still be supported by fallacious deductions from the crude birth and death rates: misleading suggestions as to the causes of unemployment are an example of the use of this fallacy. It is only now being fully appreciated that whilst the difference between the crude birth and death rates may indicate a population to be increasing or decreasing, the real course of events can only be obtained from the Net Reproductive Rate, combined with the current mortality and fertility rates: this result may be in a different sense from the former. The net reproductive rate is the ratio of the number of prospective mothers among the off-spring, to the number of existing mothers in the population at any time. This conception of estimating the growth of a community is the work of Dr. Kuczynski, and, in addition to giving a more accurate analysis of the situation, it has made the problem more comprehensible to the interested lay man.

Using this method of attack, Dr. Charles shows how the populations of the so-called civilized countries are tending to fall. Their

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

net reproductive rates are decreasing. Even though in some cases the populations may be increasing at present, such increases must each year become smaller until they become decreases if certain existing conditions are maintained. The net reproductive rate for England is now only just over 0.75 ; when we consider the causes adduced for this, there is little reason to hope for it to increase during the present state of society, and under these conditions, the population of England in 200 years may be reduced to 6,000,000 or less. Other European countries and also America are moving in the same direction. Data for India and Japan are not too reliable, but already the net reproductive rate for Japan, although well above unity, seems to be decreasing amongst the younger group of mothers.

Dr. Charles deals with other aspects of the population problem. In the past Eugenicists have been at some pains to demonstrate the harmful possibilities of differential birth rates within the community: they saw that the unskilled members were reproducing faster than the skilled and more intelligent ones. A hundred years ago this seems not to have been the case, but there is no doubt that the difference existed during the first twenty years of this century. Most populations still show the difference, but a re-examination in the light of more recent statistics shows that, whilst the fertility rate has decreased generally, the decrease has been most marked in the lower classes, *i.e.* the differential birth rates are not so marked. We must not place too much stress upon these results since wide-spread information is not yet available, but such as there is points in the one direction, and emphasizes the caution with which we should consider the alarmist assertions concerning potential racial deterioration. There is by no means a unanimous opinion amongst biologists as to the disastrous effects of such differences in birth rates, even should they exist, but there are good reasons for thinking that it may have been that the general fall was initiated in the upper classes and is now spreading to the lower.

And the causes of all this?

Dr. Charles finds that economic changes, the extension of education and hygienic methods (particularly evident in certain aspects of feminine emancipation) together with the development of contraceptive technique and propaganda, must all have played a part. In particular her thesis is summarized in the quotation

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

introducing this review. The intensification of the fight for social promotion ' has played a part in the low fertility of the more prosperous classes who have imposed or are imposing their mores on the rest of the community. The response of the less prosperous classes has been favoured by a new economic pattern of family life resulting from the restriction of child labour, the introduction of universal education, and new conditions of land tenure.' The appearance of differential fertility may have been due to the earlier appreciation among the higher classes of the advantages of family limitation in promoting social advancement, and to their easier access to the means of birth control at that time. Readers of *Middletown* will remember the following quotation and its context:

> ' The behaviour of the community in this matter of the voluntary limitation of parenthood . . . presents the appearance of a pyramid. At the top, amongst the business group, the use of relatively efficacious contraceptive methods appears practively universal, while sloping down from this peak is a mixed array of knowledge and ignorance, until the base of ignorance is reached. Here fear and worry over pregnancy frequently walk hand in hand with discouragement as to the future of the husband's job and the dreaded lay-off.' (*Middletown*, p. 125).

Here we have a situation which might well lead to a partial sterility in the prosperous sections of the community ; the spread of contraception propaganda during the years following the war suggests how this state of affairs might be altered under the necessary pressure, and conscious family limitation spread to the workers. I should like to add to these possibilities the suggestion that whereas the upper classes have the means and the incentive (of handing on their possessions) to produce some children, certain classes of society, and not only the poorest, have neither of these, whilst the increasing burden of juvenile unemployment may soon produce a more marked sterility in the lowest strata. It does not seem impossible that a reversed differential fertility (already observed in some cities on the continent) may yet appear.

So far the book has been very interesting. The facts have been presented in an orderly and stimulating manner. There are sections where we could have wished for more details or further discussion, but it would be unjust to emphasize these points in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

view of the very conflicting and elementary state of population studies to-day. Dr. Charles in this book is translating for the public the scientific results of a large number of workers (including herself) and she has filled a definite gap in the information available for the reader who is sensitive to the changing world. The gap has been most suitably filled by the particular way in which she has introduced the problem, *i.e.* with the ecological background. Ecology has arisen as a scientific approach to the old anecdotal natural history and consists in the study of organisms in relation to their environment, taking particular account of other living forms. The opening chapter of this book gives some account of the various ways in which Man is controlled by and is controlling his environment. No better form of introduction could have been used, and in fact, only in relation to ecology can any population problems be discussed profitably. It requires no great stretch of imagination to realize that most if not the whole of Man's thought is concerned with different aspects of his ecology . . . mainly intraspecific ecology, *i.e.* concerning his relations with other human beings . . . but in many ways Man does not provide the most suitable material from which to obtain an appreciation of the delicate equilibria existing between the organism and its surroundings: Man's history shows many examples of the results of not allowing for the secondary and subsequent effects of altering these equilibria. General ecology is emphasizing the importance of a careful analysis of the present situation before initiating experiments on a broad scale, and we feel that this has a much wider application than within the limits ordinarily understood by applied biology.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Charles' grasp of the problem should weaken in discussing the solution. Whilst admitting that the future development in the scientific field may affect the growth of populations (readers of *The Brave New World* or the review of that book in *Scrutiny* will realize many of the possibilities implicit in biological progress, and will have their opinions of them) Dr. Charles makes a plea for the reinstatement of the child as a functional unit in a planned ecology—a scheme she admits to be difficult if not impossible in the capitalist society. Only a superficial account is given of the methods required to do this. References to trends in the U.S.S.R. (perhaps mentioned as the only existing alternative

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to a capitalist society, though a Marxist bias seems to appear at times) and the linking of production and education as part of the training of the child from early years, only evade the immediate issues of the problem. Its existence is not to be doubted—the choice of the baby car in preference to the much more expensive human baby is all too frequent, but we should like to know a little more about Dr. Charles' suggestions. What are the values on which they are based? It seems evident that Dr. Charles has chosen the Religion of Progress in preference to that of Christianity, but there are many sects in the former movement and the biologists in it have different ideas of a ' planned ecology.' It is not easy to ascertain just where Dr. Charles stands in this matter. Is the Russian Marxist form of communism suggested or not? If some other form of communism is meant, then we feel that we have not been led sufficiently deeply into the scheme. There are many who object to the Marxist experiment, on the grounds that its progress is directed along one dangerous rut (these dangers have been elaborated in *Scrutiny* before) who yet appreciate the problem of finding a satisfactory alternative to the Acquisitive Society sufficiently to discuss willingly the suggestions of specialists ; but unless Russian Marxism is here implied, we are left with little to discuss, though it may be significant that Dr. Charles has not thought it necessary to introduce the subject of Leisure into her ' planned ecology.' There is not here the intelligent anticipation of the effects of the experiment which an ecologist should have shown, and the omission is the more deeply felt as it leaves unfinished the exposition of the ecological method of approach to the problem. With this qualification, then, we recommend this book as a useful account of population changes which ' are themselves symptoms of changes affecting the whole fabric of social life.'

C. E. LUCAS.

SCRUTINY is published by the Editors, 6 Chesterton Hall Crescent, Cambridge, distributed by Deighton, Bell & Co., Ltd., Trinity Street, Cambridge; and printed by S.G. Marshall & Son, Round Church St., Cambridge, England.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED